Marxism Today

January 1987 95p

- Interview with Bob Geldof
- Fred Halliday on Terrorism
- Moors Murders
- Reagangate
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Frank Spooner Pictures

Arms and the Man: Iranian soldiers at the front, and (inset), President Reagan

Reagangate

When the Iranian arms sales story broke in Beirut at the time of the US mid-term elections, President Reagan's reaction was to copy Richard Nixon and blame the media for refusing to suppress it. To a press corps that had tried and failed for six years to scratch the celebrated Teflon coating, it was an invitation to attack the presidential pedestal with hammers and chisels.

For once Washington reporters went to work in a body. The Watergate analogy has been criticised as faulty and in some respects it is. But it's useful as a way of measuring the decline in Reagan's fortunes. The differences between then and now are as instructive as the more obvious similarities.

As in Nixon's time, it is the media that has made the running, leaving Congress and the judiciary far behind. But in the summer of 1972, only two reporters, Woodward and Bernstein, pursued the story with vigour, and their newspaper, the *Washington Post*, reached out no further than the suburbs of the District of Columbia. Most other papers played the story down until well after the presidential election in November.

As for television, the only medium with potential impact from coast to coast, the national networks all but ignored the Watergate story until the public hearings of the Senate Watergate committee made compulsive viewing in the spring of 1973; intimidated by a barrage of abuse from Vice-President Agnew, they had simply given up criticising the Nixon government.

This time television has been a potent force from the start. That's partly because the old actor can't resist using it, even to defend the scarcely defensible, and even to the point of going before the cameras without careful coaching or a script.

But it's also because the networks are less timid than they used to be – for example, they have revived the practice Agnew persuaded them to drop: the technique of 'instant analysis', in which television journalists dissect the president's message immediately after delivery. With some justice, Agnew called it 'telling the people what to think'.

Thus prompted, or not, a surprisingly large number of Americans have told the pollsters they don't accept the president's attempts to explain himself. In less than a month his approval rating has dropped from 67% to 46%, a steeper and swifter fall than any of his predecessors ever suffered.

Compare it with Nixon's ability to hold the line: six months after Woodward and Bernstein had shown that several of Nixon's men had conspired to break the law, his own approval rating was steady at 68%. Not for another three months, until after he had defended himself on television, did his rating fall to 45%.

There were other factors, of course – factors that helped Nixon then and which are doing nothing for Reagan now. In Nixon's day Americans still believed that the presidency somehow ennobles an incumbent. Also, few Americans found dirty tricks at election time, even burglaries and bugging, especially upsetting.

Sadly for Ronald Reagan, Americans loathe and detest the Ayatollah (the 'Great Satan' syndrome cuts both ways) and have ambiguous feelings at best about the Contras, who are widely seen as losers who just might one day drag American boys into a fruitless, unwinnable war.

Ronald Reagan, whose policies have never been as popular as his personality, is fighting on difficult ground: even if he were now to admit mistakes and expose whatever is left to expose, that might not be the end of the matter; his competence would still be in question.

His advisers, however, may be telling the president to play for time. In the first place, Christmas is coming. Secondly, following changes in the law, the Independent Counsel is likely to be considerably less independent than the Special Prosecutor of Richard Nixon's day: Archibald Cox, in particular, was a free spirit with unrestricted terms of reference who kept Watergate boiling with a series of dramatic, highly publicised moves. To date, all five Independent Counsels have had to work within a brief drawn up by the Justice Department; not one has brought a prosecution.

And third, full-scale, public congressional committee hearings cannot begin until well into January, when the lawmakers return from their recess. By then the leaders of Congress may be having anguished thoughts about the need for damage limitation and the danger of following trails to the Oval Office; even the Democrats are wary of crippling another president two years before the end of his term.

But whether the media would go along with self-imposed restriction is quite another question: in Reagan's words, the sharks are circling in the water, and smelling blood. ●

Charles Wheeler

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Banking With Botha

The announcement that Barclays was pulling out of South Africa was greeted with dismay by South Africa's political allies and delight by opponents of apartheid the world over.

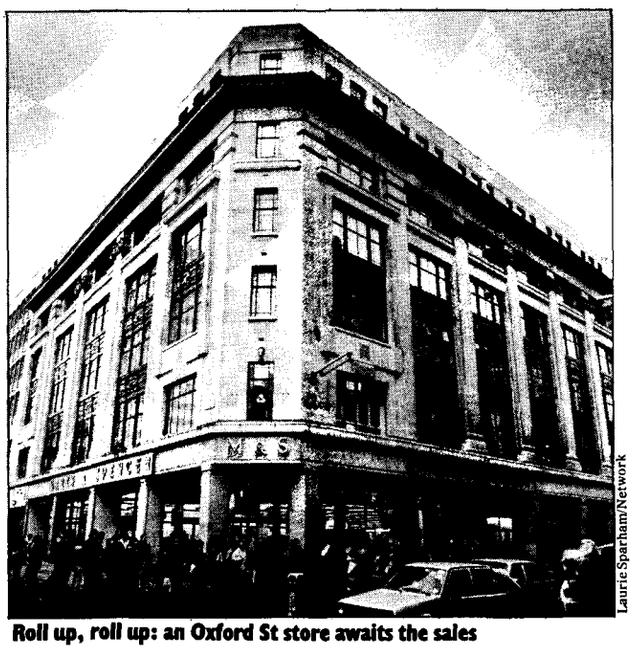
Barclays' withdrawal demonstrated the disastrous impact of staying with Botha's regime. Worth £225m just a year and a half ago, their assets must now be given away for nearer £82m. Add the long-term damage caused by losing many potential customers through the students' boycott, and Barclays' obstinacy had begun to look like stupidity.

The Barclays campaign was unique in being the only 'secondary boycott' approved by the British Anti-Apartheid Movement. A secondary boycott is imposed on products from organisations involved in South Africa, as against a primary boycott, aimed at direct exports from that country.

AAM opposed secondary boycotts, arguing that 'we would have to tell everyone not to buy a car apart from a Lada'. This approach is in marked contrast to the hugely successful boycott campaigns in Reagan's America. It was the secondary boycott movement there, with cities like New York refusing to do business with banks lending to South Africa, that led to South Africa's 1985 loan default, ruling out foreign loans for the foreseeable future.

In spite of this, it seems unlikely that AAM will modify its policy on secondary boycotting in Britain. Yet some vital British investments remain in South Africa. They include the largest foreign-controlled employer and richest goldmining company, Consolidated Goldfields/GFSA. The British government is now preparing legislation which will prevent councils from boycotting companies like ConsGold's roadbuilding subsidiary Amey Roadstone because of their links with South Africa. A boycott against ConsGold now would help fight the legislation and tar the Tories with ConsGold's appalling employment practices in South Africa. ●

Ian Lepper



Laurie Sparham/Network

Roll up, roll up: an Oxford St store awaits the sales

Never, Never Land

'It's got to stop Do. It's got to stop. You've got to stop using the plastic.' Billy Corkhill in *Brookside*, Channel 4.

The opening weeks of January, when consumers queue up outside shop doors to pour into the winter sales, are the busiest weeks of the year for Britain's retailers.

This year's January sales follow a sustained surge in consumer expenditure. In 1986 consumer spending rose by an estimated 5%. The consensus among economic forecasters is that it will continue to rise, by about 4% a year, into the early 1990s.

Luxury goods are absorbing an ever-increasing proportion of this money. In almost every consumer sector luxury goods are emerging as the fastest growing products. Many of them are imported. The spectacle of an economy in which imports of consumer goods rose by 25% in the third quarter of 1986 has already prompted the Labour Party to accuse the Thatcher government of presiding over a repetition of the 'Barber Boom' which ushered in years of trade deficits and spiralling inflation in the 1970s.

What makes this ethos of conspicuous consumption so difficult to entertain is that the official figures on soaring consumer expenditure sit so oddly with the *other* official figures – those which paint a picture of a Britain in which years of prolonged unemployment and depleted benefits have taken their toll on the disposable incomes of so high a proportion of the population.

A recent study from the Department of Employment, the 1985 *Family Expenditure Survey*, contrasts the affluence of a household where the principal wage earner is in full-time employment, which spends an average of £205 a week, with the poverty of a household where the principal wage earner is in prolonged unemployment and which spends half that.

The imbalance is equally pronounced between North and South. The average household in the South East spends £181 each week, compared with £131 for its counterpart in the North.

Given the scale of the very real poverty confronting such a huge swathe of the population, the surge in consumer spending seems, on the surface at least, to be all the more remarkable.

The growing gap between the pace of increases in earnings and inflation – currently 7.5% and 3% respectively – offers one explanation. The increased use of consumer credit offers another.

In a society in which setting foot inside a department store and brandishing a cheque book is enough to ensure 'instant credit' on a store card, it is scarcely surprising that consumer credit is booming. The 5m people owning Barclaycards in 1979 had swollen to more than 8m by the end of last year. Household debt rose from absorbing 40% of income to 65% in the same period. The amount of new credit given to consumers surged from £5.1 billion to £6.2 billion between 1984 and 1985 alone.

The growth of consumer credit has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in bad debt. It is difficult to gauge the scale of the personal bad debt problem. But the indicators are ominous.

Electricity, gas, even water disconnections have all increased in number; as have building society repossessions for mortgage default and county court proceedings for 'money plaints' or debt. It is estimated that one in 20 households are at least two months behind with their mortgage repayments. And loan sharks have joined pawnbrokers as one of the great growth industries of the Thatcherite 1980s.

Even the improbable figures of the governor of the Bank of England and the chairman of Barclays Bank have been moved to voice concern about the growth in personal debt problems. For them there is at least the commercial comfort that their loans will be relatively safe, at least for as long as the value of the liquid assets used as security for the loans – in other words house prices – continues to rise.

If house prices falter – and nothing is likelier to make that happen faster than a stream of building society repossession sales – then the consumer credit gravy train will grind to a halt. So will spending on the never-never and the apparently effortless increase in consumer expenditure. ●

Alice Rawsthorn

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Consenting Fathers

'Project Genesis', a new Norwegian campaign, wants to stop women being able to have abortions without the 'father's' consent. Robert Hercz, the Project's founder, is taking a case to the European Court to establish his paternal rights.

Hercz's relationship broke down irretrievably when his partner was three months pregnant: she had an abortion. He wants to contest her right to make the decision alone and, having exhausted the Norwegian courts, is taking his case under Articles 2, 3 and 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights to establish that the aborted foetus had a 'right to life', was 'tortured' and that as a prospective father, he has a right to 'private . . . and family life'.

If successful the case would make it harder for women to have legal abortions in Europe. It also raises important issues about consent. In the UK there is no legal obligation to get the spouse's consent, although DHSS guidelines state 'the consent of the partner as well as of the prospective patient should be obtained'.

Take marital rape: could a husband force his wife to give birth against her will by withholding his consent? Instead of giving medical advice, doctors could become arbiters in marital conflict.

The trend exemplified by Hercz's case, against a woman's right to choose and towards a paternalist intervention, could have serious consequences for women's independence. Certainly, women's rights are under attack: especially if men are to be given sweeping legal powers to veto their partner's abortion rights by overturning their decisions.

Project Genesis assumes women cannot make judgments and that each child has two responsible parents. It raises serious issues about who controls and owns women's bodies. The organisers are planning an international conference to consider the whole issue of when life begins. ●

Corinne Sweet

Mike Abrahams/Network

Tax targets: residents of Glasgow's Red Road flats

Blueprint For A Poll Tax

By spring 1992, if the government has its way, virtually all Scots over 18 will be paying 'community charge', a thinly disguised poll tax. A few years later, ministers hope, it will have been extended across the rest of Britain.

The central motive behind the new system, which will completely replace domestic rates, is to make it impossible for left-wing local authorities to spend heavily on services without taxing all electors – not just householders or businesses.

Councils' spending would be made up of a direct government grant, as now, with the remainder coming from the community charge, a flat-rate tax on almost all adults which would rise or fall depending on the level of spending.

Opposition MPs have argued that the community charge is simply a cynical attempt by the government to rescue itself from the prospect of electoral annihilation in Scotland and the constitutional problems that would raise for a third Thatcher administration.

It is true that, despite a recent recovery, the situation of the Scottish Tories is grim and that the community charge would result in an immediate cash saving for large numbers of wavering middle-class voters in key constituencies in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The government's own figures suggest that the number of Scots who will directly contribute to local government when the charge is fully introduced (there will be a three-year transitional period, from 1989) will double from around 2m to 3.85m. About half of adult Scots would benefit and half lose. Very few of the losers, since it is a regressive tax, are Tory voters. QED.

There is certainly something in this; Tory ministers have made little attempt to hide their relief that middle-class Scots will no longer be faced with the kind of swingeing rate revaluation increases which recently caused widespread disaffection.

But the central motive has little to do with Scotland, and is a matter of long-term political strategy rather than short-term electoral gain. The electoral bonus explains why the scheme is to be introduced in Scotland first, but not why it emerged in the first place.

It is the prospect of directly linking council spending to the community charge, so electors would be faced with a payment of – say – an extra 20p a week for a particular project or policy, which so appeals to ministers.

This stems from the belief that many voters will elect 'irresponsible, high-spending' authorities because they themselves do not have to contribute to the rates bill. (It is certainly the case that the rates base of many inner urban areas has declined dramatically due to the movement of the wealthier populations out to suburban developments and the decline of traditional city centre manufacturing.)

So under the new system, even the poorest adults will have to pay something – probably a minimum of 20% – of their community charge, the rest being covered by a complex system of tapered rebates administered through the (post-Fowler reforms) social security system.

Even students will be required to contribute, with their rebates coming

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through the grant system. Most adults will be registered through a 'responsible person' at their home, though students will register at their colleges and there will be a collective community charge for hostels, paid by the landlord.

Beneficiaries will include many single parents, and single elderly people living in relatively large houses. Nonetheless, it is clear that vast numbers of people – not far short of half the adult population if the Scottish figures are repeated elsewhere – will pay at least some of the tax, who did not pay rates before.

And a tough capping system will be introduced to stop local authorities from imposing rate increases above inflation on local businesses to compensate. Once business valuations have been brought into line north and south of the border, the Tories intend to introduce a new national business rate. It is not however, expected to be severe.

Apart from the clearly regressive nature of the tax and the highly complex and expensive system needed to administer it, what worries some Labour MPs most are the implications for civil liberties, rather than the likely impact on local voting.

Community charge is to be based on a register, compiled by the electoral registrar, with fines and surcharges for those who fail to notify their local official within a month of moving to a new area. Unlike the electoral roll, the community charge register will be an up-to-date record of where everybody lives at any time. Civil liberty groups are already protesting about the use which could be made of such a list by the police, and government officials.

The opposition parties will put up a fierce fight in the Commons and may force concessions, but their basic case is hampered by the long Labour record of accepting the inadequacies of the domestic rate system in principle and offering nothing better in practice. ●

Andrew Marr

Aquino On The Edge

On November 23, the day after her chief of staff's pre-emptive strike against ultra-rightist army dissidents, President Aquino broadcast to the nation in an uncharacteristic mood of anger and impatience. 'My circumspection has been viewed as weakness and my sincere attempts at reconciliation as indecision', she said. 'This cannot continue.'

To mollify the disaffected colonels, however, she immediately served notice that her vexation should also be heeded by the Communist Party (CPP) and the New People's Army (NPA). Unless a ceasefire agreement was reached within a week, she threatened, bipartisan talks would be terminated and the military would launch a major new counter-insurgency campaign. Two days after Aquino's broadcast a truce was agreed, to begin on December 10 and to last for 60 days.

The ceasefire talks thus ended as they had begun, with the Communists on the defensive. Having failed to contribute to Marcos' downfall, the CPP had inevitably faced difficulties in maintaining the momentum of armed struggle against an overwhelmingly more popular regime which even party leaders acknowledged as having a 'liberal democratic' tendency. Mindful of 'the people's clamour for peace', CPP negotiators persevered with the talks despite persistent rebuffs.

Twice they threatened to withdraw, firstly to secure the release of a senior party leader arrested whilst acting as one of their consultants, and secondly to await justice for the brutal slaying of the president of the militant KMU trade union federation. Neither objective was attained. Then there was a series of retreats on the actual terms of a ceasefire.

Government inflexibility during the ceasefire talks, however, failed to appease the ultra-rightists, who had been dismayed by Aquino's kid-glove reconciliation policies ever since she came to power. They were outraged when CPP cadres were released from prison, including the party's principal founder and the NPA's erstwhile top commander.

Aquino's cabinet had been 'stuffed with pinks'. Suspect individuals had been appointed in droves to the government bureaucracy. A Human Rights Commission, headed by a notorious pink, had begun probing abuses committed by the military during the Marcos years whilst ignoring the misdemeanours of the Left. And finally, in the rightist view, there was the naivete and folly of the ceasefire talks themselves, to which the military had not even been invited.

What has become alarmingly obvious in recent months is that the cold war-style anti-communism which prompted this near-pathological response to Aquino's initiatives, far from being confined to a Rambo fringe in the military, is in fact the institutional norm.

The Left in the Philippines has little reason, given the current climate, to regard the 'fresh start' now promised by Aquino with much optimism. Increasingly the government appears as a fragile, fractious coalition held together by little more than the popularity of the president herself.

Aquino's survival up to and beyond the first anniversary of her dramatic accession to power has become problematic. In the short term, it seems, her prospects depend on the outcome of the plebiscite due to be held in February to ratify a constitution which will enable her to remain in office without standing for re-election.

If the truce with the NPA is honoured, meanwhile, negotiations with CPP representatives on substantive political issues are scheduled which both sides recognise will prove much more difficult than the original ceasefire talks.

The greatest danger, though, is that the plebiscite and the negotiations will both be rendered academic by an authoritarian military that decides the complexities and restraints of civilian rule are not to its taste. ●

Jim Richardson

Piers Cavendish/Reflex

Uneasy truce: communist guerrillas of the New People's Army

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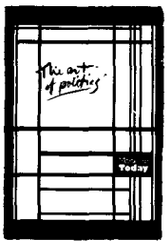

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Them and Us

Standing in the airport on the way home from the European Parliament at Strasbourg recently I found myself next to a man in a flash waistcoat and smoking a big cigar, who let off a long, slow fart. The body belonged to the former minister for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, who'd been wandering around the European Parliament with a leading tobacco company. This degenerate little incident is an index not only of men's notorious habit of noisy farting, but of something more important: big corporations take the European Community seriously, they think it is worth canvassing members of the European Parliament. Most of the Left in Britain wouldn't think it worth the time or money.

Mason's visit was connected with something that ought to make us change our mind: the attempts by Scottish MEP Ken Collins and the Euro-Parliament's important environment committee to take 1% of the price paid to tobacco producers through the Common Agricultural Policy and give it to the cancer programme.

How can the traditional anti-market stance of the Left help us understand, not to mention support, such a move? We are still stuck in the slogans of the EC referendum in 1975. Labour Party headquarters and Neil Kinnock have over the past couple of years been quietly re-thinking the EC. Since 1983 the party's policy has shifted from outright opposition to withdrawal as a last option. On a more practical front, working parties are developing between the Labour Party and the German SDP, who these days enjoy a close relationship with the Italian Communist Party.

But this rethinking has barely touched the British Labour Group (BLG) in Strasbourg. Socialist and communist members of the European Parliament remain frustrated and impatient at the absence of the British Labour Group and the British Left from the attempt to build a European Left.

Isolation from our continental comrades, and ignorance about the mysterious ways of the EC have produced a virtual silence within the British Left about the debates now surrounding the EC's political metamorphosis: the European Communities (Amendment) Bill now making its way through the House of Commons will legislate for the Single European Act adopted by the EC earlier this year. It is not only designed to end restrictions on the movement of people, goods and capital within the 12 member states by 1992, but to give greater powers to the European Parliament and to give the EC the power to intervene in some terms and conditions of employment, foreign policy and the environment.

All the average person knows about the EC derives from some successful Thatcherite table-banging over the cost of Britain's contribution and about food mountains. And yet parts of the Left in Europe, sometimes in alliance with Christian Democrats and Liberals, are trying to match the promotion of the 'single market' with a social strategy.

Some of the most stringent challenges to Thatcherism's employment strategy and Britain's role as a big polluter have come from Europe. Where does that put our traditional opposition to the EC? Hedy d'Ancoma, former Dutch social affairs minister, now an MEP, is worried that the attitude of the BLG leaves the European field to the Tories. The British government 'use the anti-European attitude in the population to withold things which are important for working people.'

The British Tories have fought hard against social regulation of the market, and many continental Europeans see the Tories and their deregulation strategy as a major threat in the EC. The Italian Independent, Vera Squarcialupi, who is on the Communist Party list, feels, like many others, that this makes it vital to establish an effective alliance with the BLG, 'But', she adds, 'it is difficult to talk with them on European problems. The SPD and PCI are convinced Europeanists and the BLG are not, we study problems in a European dimension: it is a Europe of capital so we must build a Europe of workers. Nations have no reason to exist any more.'

Heinke Salisch, a member of the SPD group, reminds us that it is the British government which is blocking progressive directives on the environment, on women and the labour market, 'and I'm sure the German government is happy about this. What we can do in this parliament is make sure the people know. I'm opposed to the British Left's attitude. The community is widening. You have to participate in the debate around a new philosophy of the Left in Europe. The BLG is not taking part in that discussion. They're still playing naughty boys and girls. Sometimes you'd like to shake them and say "think!"'

Until recently, the Campaign Group has been the dominant force for 'rejectionism' within the BLG and Richard Balfe, one of the MEPs on the Left, admits that 'the Campaign Group within the BLG has found it difficult to work within the framework of the European socialist group.'

Probably the sole survivor of the Campaign Group's absolute opposition to the EC is Les Huckfield, who no longer even seems to take himself very seriously. 'Nothing that happens here is of the slightest importance for the poor devils I represent,' he said. He's got no time for the rest of the socialist group – the biggest single group in the parliament – 'there's only half a dozen you can talk to,' and anyway, 'the power lies in the picket lines and the demos,' he says.

The Flemish socialist Marijke von Hemeldonk, while admiring the British MEPs' rugged roots in their constituencies is depressed by the spectacle of 'people making a lot of noise in corridors but not in committee. During the miners' strike British MEPs were collecting money, but they weren't there when the economic committee was discussing a report from the coal committee and they didn't intervene in the budget. This is bad behaviour.'

Bad behaviour sometimes extends to nationalist contempt for other nationalities as if the trouble with Europe is that it is full of foreigners.

Ken Collins reckons that 'much of what has passed for left-wing policy on Europe has just been nationalism masquerading.' But already some MEPs on the Left feel that the BLG ought to come clean about the need to change the emphasis and tone of the Left's interventions. Stan Newens asks himself, 'how can I be for a nuclear-free Europe and not come here and talk about it?

Carole Tongue, who is busy on the women's committee and also in establishing trade union links between workers in her East London constituency and trade unionists across Europe, says 'things don't stand still, and the party hasn't evolved its ideas while the EC has been evolving. The European Right is using the worst aspects of the Treaty of Rome. Capital is organised at the international level, but where has the labour movement been at the European level?'

She adds: 'The environment is the paradigm, the nuclear cloud knows no borders, pollution renders national sovereignty obsolete. Knee-jerk anti-marketeers are fighting the wrong battle because the Right are in there shaping the agenda. We should use the European Community for our networks. The structures of the EC aren't right, the Treaty of Rome isn't right, but the level is right.'

We need a major new debate on the British Left about the EC, not just in the quiet corridors of Walworth Road, but among all of us, and not just about what we used to think, but about what we need to do now. ●

Beatrix Campbell

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LETTERS

Electoral Concerns

Far more than the SDP, the Communist Party has become the party for people who believe themselves above the messy business of politics and in particular that of actually winning votes. Incapable of winning themselves, they seek to tell others how to do it. The problem of this approach is amply illustrated by the recent article by Grahl and Rowthorn (*MT*, Nov) (GR).

Contrary to GR's assertion that our target of 1m off the dole in two years was kept as modest as possible, I believe that it is an ambitious but credible target. If it proves easy to hit as they infer, then of course we shall better it. What do they suggest our motive would be for not wanting to reduce unemployment by the maximum possible? But all they offer is criticism of our target rather than electorally attractive and economically feasible policies to beat it. Similarly they devote much space to the absence of an incomes policy – particularly a virtual freeze on the top 50% – but do not describe the practicalities of how it might work.

Turning to their criticism of our tax proposals, do they believe that significantly higher taxes on the middle income groups would improve or diminish our chances of winning votes from those floaters unable to make up their minds between ourselves and the Alliance or Tories?

In any case I'm not convinced that shortage of cash is the major constraint on policy in the short run. It is lack of capacity and skilled labour and the horrendous balance of payments constraint we shall inherit from the Conservatives. The Conservatives project in excess of £20 billion in unallocated resources over the next three years. On top of this Labour could probably spend an extra £6-7 billion financed by borrowing, an extra £3.6 billion financed from tax increases on the rich, and an extra £3-4 billion from repatriated funds channelled via the NIB; it could also utilise extra resources saved by reducing unemployment and shifting to a non-nuclear defence policy.

GR do not mention that our anti-poverty and redistribution package includes the introduction of independent taxation and the reallocation of £4.4 billion saved from ending the married man's allowance. Taken with our other tax and benefit proposals, our minimum wage and our employment policies, this represents a massive, radical and feasible assault on poverty within the early years of a Labour government. ●

Doug Jones, Economic Assistant to Roy Hattersley

Incomes Policy

John Grahl and Bob Rowthorn's unanswerable argument for redistribution and incomes policy is like a breath of fresh air cutting through the stale evasions and excuses that have stifled serious discussion on the Left in this area for so long. Let's hope it's not too late for a Labour government elected at the next general election.

If redistribution is to be achieved by consent, through taxation and incomes policy, the economic, moral and political case must be argued and become widely understood and accepted. Unfortunately the Left has historically argued the case against, thus reinforcing the narrow sectionalist consciousness that is such an obstacle to solidaristic class action.

As John and Bob remind us, a problem common to the last Labour government's social contract and the present Labour Party's national economic assessment is that neither was preceded by discussion involving more than a handful of those who would have to carry them out and/or be affected by them.

The language of incomes policy is that of priorities and planning. It has often, though not always, been used to buttress the existing distribution of income, wealth and power. But it need not be. Socialists cannot opt out of discussion over priorities nor run away from the need for planning. Only by arguing for the priorities that reflect our values and political judgement, by making the case for the redistribution of political and economic power needed to make possible the planned achievement of these priorities, can we help create the conditions in which a Labour government would have the popular support necessary to carry through its redistributive and modernising policies. ●

Pat Devine, Manchester

Girls and YTS

Cynthia Cockburn (*MT*, Dec) makes some crucial points relevant to the effort to improve occupational possibilities for girls, and illustrates the dilemma experienced by those struggling to implement change at the practical level.

It is becoming a truism to say that young people are asked to make decisions about their educational and occupational future which will have far reaching implications at a point when they are attempting to establish their sexual identity. They experience an ideological and material bombardment, in which they themselves play a part, pushing them into traditional patterns of gender relations.

With little contrary pressure from any source, and gender divisions in work so dramatic, it is very easy for sexual identity to be mapped onto occupational destiny.

Easy but not inevitable. The buck of responsibility for gender stereotying is passed to and fro between individuals in different institutions, but all contribute to the process, and there are strong arguments that the school contributes more than most. Education becomes a critical intervention point to effect change in gender expectations and full use must be made of this potential.

We can also question the view that girls' stereotyped choices are a response to the realities of their situation and the labour market. It is a macro level explanation (these are the jobs for which they are destined in general and statistical terms) which underlies both the interpretation of such choices as realistic, and the choices themselves. But the specific work suggested is frequently unrealistic given the actual demands of the labour market; there is after all a limit to the number of hairdressers, air hostesses and nurses which can be absorbed. And changing technology is squeezing the favoured secretarial and clerical fields.

Careers advice is most frequently too little too late, and girls are left to make decisions in an informational vacuum into which ready-made traditionally-oriented messages from peer group, media, family and school rush. That vacuum could be filled with information, advice and support for non-stereotyped choices. ●

Janet Holland, London

YTS Campaigning

Since the introduction of Youth Training Schemes, trade unions have campaigned locally and nationally to achieve a better deal for YTS trainees. This has centred upon securing a 'topping-up' allowance. A campaign on sex-stereotyping would offer the opportunity to make some interesting and radical demands of YTS. We could campaign around the strategies that Cynthia Cockburn suggests – single sex schemes, assertiveness training, and self defence classes.

To 'move from equality of opportunity to similarity of outcome and achievement' will require a co-ordinated and concerted commitment by all agencies who are involved with YTS.

I recently spoke to a group of YTS supervisors about sex-stereotyping and discrimination: attendance was half that anticipated by the course organiser, who felt that the training option on equal opportunities was not taken seriously enough. One supervisor explained how difficult it was to raise the aspirations of trainees, when they felt the schools, and careers officers, regarded the schemes themselves as second best.

Challenging sex-stereotyping will require more than a single option on an MSC training programme. A beginning would be a proper induction course on the MSC equal opportunities guidelines for YTS. What is urgently needed is a broad based campaign which not only seeks to improve the allowance paid to trainees, but to transform the training given. ●

Julie Lawrence, Brighton

Identity Problem

As an unrepentant adherent to traditional marxism, as one who believes that class is critical and that gender, colour, sexual orientation etc are all peripheral to political struggle, and that alliances, popular fronts (or call them what you will) between the Labour movement and the SDP are treachery to the working class, I would be grateful if, through your letters column, I might stress that I am *not* the Alex Wood listed on your sponsorship page. ●

Alex Wood, Edinburgh District Council

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LETTERS

Reykjavik

In John Cox's letter, (*MT*, Dec), he seems to attribute to me views which I did not express. I did not say that Gorbachev's policy was a cynical continuation of past arms control policy; and I certainly do not need to be persuaded of the past failings of arms control. However, there may be some substantive points on which John and I disagree, and on which I could have made myself clearer.

I don't think we have a simple choice between dismissing Gorbachev as just another arms control cynic, and accepting Soviet positions without any scepticism whatever. It seems clear to me that the USSR is seeking genuine constraints on the arms race, involving measures of disarmament as well as 'arms control', however defined. There are obviously interesting and significant developments taking place in Soviet foreign policy, and the commitment to a nuclear-free world is indeed qualitatively different from positions taken in the Brezhnev era, and an effective way of isolating the Reagan administration politically.

However, neither John Cox nor I can say with any confidence how Gorbachev himself expects the next 15 years of US-Soviet relations to develop, or what relation Gorbachev's proposals have to Soviet military planning for that period. In addition, US obduracy over SDI and the ABM Treaty was not the only obstacle to agreement at Reykjavik, since the Soviet position on 'de-linking' INF negotiations from SDI changed.

In my view this was perfectly comprehensible, since a European INF agreement might well have relieved the political pressure on the US leadership over SDI. But in that case some of the previous Soviet flexibility over INF must have been more part of a traditionally bipolar Soviet foreign policy, and less of an innovative political approach in Europe, than has been claimed. ●

Gerard Holden, Brighton

Love and Politics

I welcomed the discussion on the family (*MT*, Dec); however, at the end of the day the participants lost their nerve – ceasing to make much sense as soon as they felt they were confronting the overwhelming forces of nature. The only defence we are left with is that families are there, they are part of life, messy, necessary, burdensome but vital. And still there are these troublesome men who perpetrate violence.

Mothering and fathering need to be thought through not as irrational bondings arising from some arbitrary sexual act, but as a complex of human relationships involving the facilitation of growth and independence of each family member. The family isn't about sex – except in so far as this word is a reductionist cop-out for something more complex. It is about the possibilities and obstacles to forming close loving relationships. The concept of love needs to be made political. ●

Maggie Urmston, London

Sinn Fein

I found the article 'Biting the vote' (*MT*, Dec); riddled with sweeping statements that disguise the true nature of the Provisional IRA and its political wing Sinn Fein.

Phrases such as the 'Northern military battleground' gloss over the sectarian nature of their violent campaign which makes no attempt to unite the working class.

The philosophy of republican socialism I would not equate with the national socialism of the Provos. I would like to see a much more balanced, in-depth analysis of the chances of 'mass support in the South' for Sinn Fein. ●

Eamonn O'Neill, Northern Ireland

Misogyny

In his article on the NHS Steve Iliffe suggested that medical treatment for car accidents and sports injuries might be financed by motor insurance and 'sports insurance'. He asks 'who should pay for *in vitro* fertilisation'?

In vitro fertilisation is the appropriate medical treatment for women who cannot get pregnant because their fallopian tubes are damaged. Why should the financing of it differ from the financing of treatment for men who cannot walk because their legs are broken? Or cannot breathe properly because they need lung transplants?

I can only interpret Steve's singling out of IVF as a special case as being motivated by misogyny. ●

Fran Hazelton, London

Families

The roundtable on the family in December's issue was a great disappointment. It didn't come to grips with many of the important questions which need to be tackled if the left and progressive movement is going to find the answers to Thatcherism's 'holier than thou' moral stance on the family.

The Left has quite rightly espoused the cause of gay and lesbian liberation – the right of every person to be free to have the sort of sexual relationships which they want to have. But we seem to have ignored the need to discuss heterosexual relationships except in terms of women's rights within the family and *vis-a-vis* her male partner. But the problems of building a loving and caring relationship in which each partner has equal rights and responsibilities have not really been addressed by the Left.

In my view these are important questions. After all, the majority of people do have heterosexual relationships, and live in a family situation based on a heterosexual relationship. Does it always have to be what Bea Campbell describes as 'very messy . . . all blood and guts', or is it possible to create something better than this? ●

Margaret Woddis, London

Childcare

Printing the provocative letter from Nick Waterfield (*MT*, Dec), could only be intended to provoke a sizeable response from parents on the way 'society' (including perhaps Nick Waterfield) leaves it to parents to find individualistic solutions to the 'problem' of child care.

The reality faced by parents, particularly of under 2s, given the unavailability of local authority day nurseries, or of workplace provision, is for one parent (who may be a sole parent) to give up work or else use a child-minder. Is to chose the latter by definition exploitative? And does it add to the 'misery and oppression of the minder'?

Alternatively is it possible that working class women, having weighed up the limited range of options available in a patriarchal and class society, actually choose child-minding for sound economic, social, practical convenience.

There is no doubt that pay is low. However minding at home may allow a women to be paid while looking after her own children, who may be provided with companions of a similar age; and school age brothers and sisters can be collected, and amused during school holidays. Child minding incurs no work expenses such as fares, meals outside. A woman who minds children while receiving supplementary benefit has 2/3 of such earnings ignored; if she works part-time (often the only alternative) only £4 (or £12 if a single parent) is disregarded.

Given that low paid part-time work, where the poverty trap bites into take-home pay, is often the sole alternative, then unless we prefer to view working-class women as always passive victims, is it not possible to view child-minding and minders in a more positive way and recognise that such women can act in their own interests? Alternatively of course we could all defer having children until the day when universal and free child care on the state arrives. ●

Sue and Mick Bradley, London

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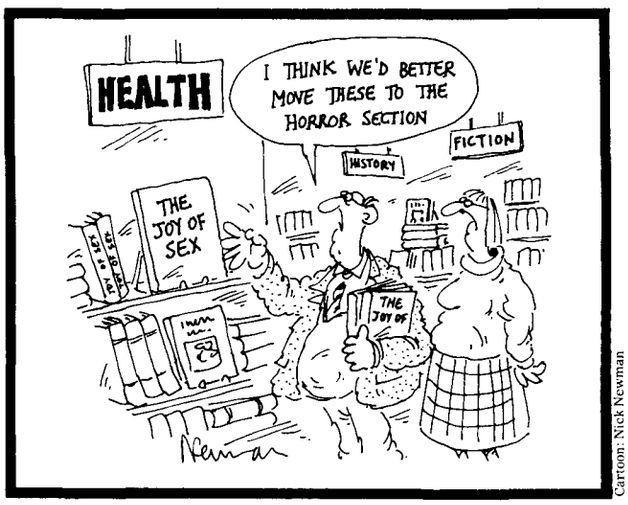

Cartoon: Nick Newman

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John Cole/Network

Down but not out. Gay solidarity in the face of public hysteria at an aids remembrance ceremony, May 1986.

Love In A Cold Climate

Rarely has a disease carried such powerful moral and social overtones. At last, however, the government has been forced to act. **Jeffrey Weeks** looks at the aids crisis

Aids may be the most serious health crisis to face the world this century. But during its relatively brief history it has become more than a ghastly and relentless disease. It has come to symbolise an age where fear, prejudice and irrationality battle against reason, responsiblity and collective endeavour. At the moment it is by no means clear which will triumph.

The reasons for fear are real enough. Some 10m people worldwide may be infected with the HIV virus, the cause of Aids. Many, perhaps most, of these will go on to get the full blown syndrome. In the USA there have been 25,000 cases of Aids, and 10,000 dead. It is estimated that up to 2m people carry the virus. Aids is already the major cause of premature death among adult males in many North American cities. In parts of central Africa the disease is rife. In the next five years up to 1.5m cases of the illness are expected on the whole continent.

The UK figures are less dramatic but still worrying. There are probably already more than 30,000 HIV carriers. Over 550 people have been diagnosed as having Aids. Half of these are dead. And the number of people with Aids doubles every 10 months. Cases of Aids are expected to rise six-fold by the end of 1988, to envelope 3,000 people.

This is a major worldwide health crisis. It has been likened to the great plagues that ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages; and to the influenza epidemic at the end of the first world war, which wiped out more people than all the fighting on all the fronts of the war itself.

But this health emergency seems all the more frightening because, at least in the West, we have grown accustomed to the triumphs of medicine in controlling disease. Even with this virus, medical science has shown its efficiency. We now know almost everything there is to know about HIV – *except* how to destroy it. In the meantime, the incidence of Aids doubles every 10 months.

This is the background to the British government's new sense of urgency. After months of prevarication – it apparently took a last-ditch direct appeal to the prime minister by the permanent head of the DHSS and the chief medical advisor to wrench her into action – the government has set up a cabinet-level committee to coordinate action. An unprecedented health education campaign has been launched, with press, radio and TV advertising, a leaflet drop on 23m households, and a £20m budget. The health secretary, Norman Fowler, has echoed the words of his advertising copy: 'Stick to one partner; if you don't, use a condom'. And for drug misusers, 'don't inject drugs; if you can't stop, don't share equipment.'

In the absence for the foreseeable future of a cure or of a vaccine to prevent the spread of the virus, the only safeguard appears to lie with changes in people's behaviour and with the public education needed to achieve that. This has been clear for some time, and has been the burden of all the expert advice and all the pressure from the groups in the population most affected.

It is some indication of the prejudice and irrationality surrounding the dis-

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ease that it has taken so long for the government to adopt a high profile policy on prevention. Here Aids ceases to be simply a devastating disease and becomes more like a battlefield for conflicting moral and political values, and ways of life.

The popular response to Aids, the fear and loathing it evokes beyond the actual impact of the disease itself, illuminates a wider crisis of norms and values. Attitudes towards Aids, and the tardy political reaction, have been shaped by the fact that from its first identification in the USA in 1981 it has been strongly associated with marginalised, oppressed or feared groups; with Haitians, and subsequently with black Americans (a disproportionate number of American victims are black); with intravenous drug abusers; and with male homosexuals.

Aids has fed easily into wider anxieties and fears that find a focus in powerful streams of racism and homophobia. The result has been predictable and disastrous: a 'moral panic' rooted in a genuine fear of the disease, but seeking scapegoats in those who were the chief sufferers from it.

Moral panics, waves of social anxiety which bring to the surface deep currents of feeling and fear, generally arise in situations of confusion and ambiguity, in periods when the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate behaviour seem to need redefining or reclassification. There is a typical stereotyping of the main actors as peculiar types of monsters, leading to an escalating level of fear and perceived threat, the taking up of panic stations and absolutist positions, and a search for symbolic solutions to the dramatised problem.

In the case of Aids there was a real, anxiety-making disease for which there was no cure, and which seemed to be localised amongst certain groups of people. Irrationally, but predictably, the form the panic took was the search for people to blame. Normally, those suffering from a terrible illness evoke sympathy. Here the victims themselves were stigmatised. Those with Aids were easily divided into two categories: the 'innocent' (haemophiliacs, female partners of bisexual men, children), and the 'guilty' (drug addicts, the 'promiscuous' and gay men).

But it is above all the linkage of Aids with homosexuality that has dominated attitudes. Aids is not a specifically homosexual disease, let alone a 'gay plague'. In the Third World it is overwhelmingly a disease amongst heterosexuals. But in most Western countries the main incidence of the illness so far has been amongst gay men. It was only when it began to dawn on people in the past few months that Aids was a general danger that the more scabrous papers like *The Sun* began to talk of a world health crisis.

The response to Aids is, however, more than a moral panic. Trying to understand it is like watching a speeded-up film about the postwar world. Many of the major fears, imagined threats, genuine changes and paranoias pass rapidly before our eyes: the 'break-up' of the family, the presence of 'alien wedges', that elusive phenomenon known as 'permissiveness'... It is above all changes in sexual mores that have come to symbolise for many people, and especially the moral Right, all the other changes that have taken place. For the former solicitor general, Sir Ian Percival, the reasons for Aids were transparent: because 'so many have strayed so far and so often from what we are taught as normal moral behaviour'. And as in many of these debates, it is the 60s that has become the symbolic focus of these changes.

There have been three major strands in the moral and sexual shifts of the past generation: a secularisation of moral attitudes, a liberalisation of popular beliefs and behaviours, and a greater readiness to value and respect social, cultural and sexual diversity. The significance of the Aids crisis is that it can be used to call into question each of these, and to advance a justification for a return to that 'normal moral behaviour' which acts as a yardstick by which to measure the presumed descent into the present.

One of the major changes in the organisation of moral behaviour over the past century has been the progressive detachment of sexual norms from religous ones. By the 1960s many of the christian churches themselves, ranging from the traditionally liberal Quakers to the established Church of England, had effectively abandoned any attempt to impose their own moral values on the whole of society. A distinction was now made between individual morality and social order, with the role of the state being redefined as guaranteeing the latter, not meddling with the former. This was the position broadly endorsed in the great wave of 'permissive legislation' in the 1960s, which reformed the law on homosexuality, abortion, censorship and divorce.

These changes were never accepted by moral conservatives nor by all the churches, and since the 1960s a gathering storm of moral absolutism and social purity has developed. In the USA a combination of television evangelism, big money and religious fundamentalism joined hands with new right forces to create the moral majority ('Neither moral nor a majority'). Britain is unlikely to see the emergence of quite such a potent force, but on a range of issues from teenage sex to the representation of sexuality, a moral Right has been mobilised, stretching from the moral rearmament enthusiasms of Mrs Mary Whitehouse to the post-feminist traditionalism of Victoria Gillick, backed by a number of more sinister figures playing their tune in parliament and elsewhere.

'Aids ceases to be simply a devastating disease and becomes more like a battlefield for conflicting moral and political values'

Aids has proved a golden opportunity for these moral entrepreneurs to raise their profile, to prove to their own satisfaction at least that what they had said all along was true. In recent years there has been growing anxiety about the effects of sexually transmitted diseases such as herpes and hepatitis B. If Aids is similarly a disease that can be transmitted sexually, then it must prove that 'promiscuity' is not only wrong but, in the inimitable words of a Tory MP, it 'kills'. And gay men, traditionally described as 'promiscuous', and the main victims of the disease in the West, thus become symbolic of the whole moral decline. As Mrs Whitehouse characteristically put it: 'Over recent years homosexuality has been represented as being perfectly normal... But now the laughing is over.'

In the age of Aids, it becomes easier to believe that the limits of medicine and of science have been reached. It therefore makes it potentially more acceptable to seek a moral explanation. 'If Aids is not an Act of God' thundered the ineffable John Junor in the *Sunday Express*, 'with consequences just as frightful as fire and brimstone, then just what the hell is it?'

This moral revivalism must not be exaggerated. A general liberalisation of attitudes has sunk deep roots since the 1960s, and with it has gone a new willingness to tolerate, if not fully accept, sexual diversity. There has been no major breach in the liberal legal reforms of the 1960s, despite several attempts to restrict access to abortion. Mrs Gillick's early legal victories in her efforts to prevent doctors providing contraceptive advice to girls under 16 proved phyrric. Tory MPs may yet succeed in tightening the laws on obscenity, but despite a huge Conservative majority their successes so far have been limited. Even the saloon bar moralist Peter Bruinvels has stated his opposition to attempting to make homosexuality illegal once again.

It is difficult to take Norman Tebbit's attack on the permissive society too seriously when his colleagues are caught dealing with prostitutes and having sex in public lavatories. It seems a little hypocritical to attack one parent families (which junior minister Rhodes Boyson recently did) when one of your former colleagues notoriously contributed to founding one. It must also be a trifle embarrassing to crusade against drug abusers when the children of Her Majesty's ministers are amongst them. Senior ministers are products and victims of the major cultural changes of the past generation like everyone else. It does not mean that they will not ride the whirlwind of reaction, but what they can do will be constrained or shaped by the political balance of forces rather than by pure prejudice.

There is considerable evidence that

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If you intend to stay with a single, long-standing partner for the rest of time. If you don't, or think you might not then Aids should be a matter of personal concern. To protect yourself and your partner(s) follow these simple guidelines.

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DO get into wanking, massage and fantasies. There's more to sex than just fucking.

If you're a straight woman or a gay man and you want to fuck then **DO** make sure your partner wears a condom.

If you're a man, **DO** wear a condom, every time you fuck.

It can take time getting used to condoms. You may want to wank with it first. Treat it as a sex toy.

DO experiment. find your favourite brand. and use plenty of water-based lubricant like KY.

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popular attitudes continue to liberalise on many issues, from pre-marital sex to abortion and divorce. There is a greater acceptance of diverse lifestyles and of varied domestic patterns. Even the stigma of illegitimacy is now set for the history books.

'The response to Aids is more than a moral panic. Trying to understand it is like watching a speeded-up film about the postwar world'

There are, nevertheless, significant cross-currents, and homosexuality in particular is caught up in them. Opinion polls suggest that a clear majority of the British public are now against discriminatory laws. But 52% in a recent poll would still prefer not to have a homosexual neighbour, and nearly 70%, according to the *British Social Attitudes* survey, refuse to recognise the legitimacy of lesbian and gay relationships.

Yet, along with the rise of feminism, the emergence of a public lesbian and gay presence has been one of the most dramatic changes in the social and sexual scene over the past 30 years. From being a love that barely whispered its name it has now become highly vocal.

These changes have not gone unnoticed. In the USA mobilisation against homosexuality has been a significant element in the new Right's efforts to shape a new majority. Just as feminism can be blamed for profoundly disrupting traditional demarcations between the sexes, homosexuality has been attacked for undermining marriage and the family. Lesbian and gay ways of life are deeply antithetical to the 'pro-family' rhetoric and authoritarian moral values espoused by the new Right.

And the whole issue of the legitimacy of non-traditional sexual relations is a fraught one beyond the bounds of the new Right. Consider for instance the torment and convolutions of the Archbishop of York, Dr John Habgood, in an interview in the *Daily Mail*. He did not, of course, want to see homosexuals 'beleaguered, threatened and shunned by society.' On the other hand it was unwise to go to the other extreme. He confessed to regarding homosexuality as a 'misfortune', and he was opposed to seeing homosexuality and heterosexuality as 'two perfectly viable alternatives'.

For the Left it is an even more difficult topic, cutting across traditional political positions and disrupting other loyalties. The pro-gay policies of the London borough of Haringey, under a radical black leader have been bitterly opposed both by sections of the white working class and by militant elements in the black community, because of their supposed threat to the family.

There has been an 'unfinished revolution' in attitudes to sexuality in general and to homosexuality in particular. There have been many fundamental changes in the past 30 years, but their impact has been uneven and fragmented, producing frustration as well as social progress, new tensions as well as the alleviation of old injustices. Secularisation, liberalisation, changes in the pattern of relationships have all taken place. But they have left deep residues of anxiety and fear, which Aids as a social phenomenon has fed on and reaffirmed.

Aids is not a disease of a particular type of person. It has affected, and killed, heterosexuals and homosexuals, women and men, white and black, young and old, rich and poor, the promiscuous and the inexperienced. It is the result not of a way of life but of a virus. Moreover, despite the nature of the illness it causes HIV is not a particularly strong or infectious virus. This is why Aids is not transmitted through the air, nor by casual contact, nor by even quite intimate activity such as kissing. It is spread only through the exchange of bodily fluids, particularly vaginal fluids, semen and blood.

Some groups of people are currently more at risk than others. But it is misleading to talk about 'risk categories'. This inevitably leads to a confident belief that it is always someone else's disease. The identification of Aids as a 'gay plague' has potentially disastrous effects. It not only leads to the stigmatisation of the disease itself, but it also encourages those who do not see themselves as gay to believe that they will not get it.

It is not high risk 'categories' that spread Aids, it is high risk activities, those which involve the interchange of bodily fluids. These include genital and anal intercourse without protection, oral sex which involves the swallowing of semen, sexual practices (like fist fucking) which might rupture delicate blood vessels, oral-genital sex, and drug-taking where needles are shared.

'Promiscuity' as such is not the danger. Obviously, the more partners you have the more likely you are to come into contact with someone who is carrying the virus. But it is not the number of partners that constitutes the real danger, it is what you do with them. Nor does drug abuse alone lead to Aids. It can only do so when blood is exchanged via dirty needles.

Given that at the moment there is no cure for Aids, and there is unlikely to be one in the next few years, what is clearly essential is that people change their habits sufficiently to avoid high risk activities. Other 'solutions' are clearly impractical or unlikely to work. Injunctions to lifelong monogamy might seem a simple solution, as might giving up drug abuse. But in practice, as the government's advertising effectively concedes, our social natures are a little more recalcitrant than that.

The moral Right has offered more draconian suggestions. These have ranged from the compulsory testing of those at risk, including everyone coming from those parts of Africa where the incidence of Aids is high, to the segregation of the infected and sick. Leaving aside the racism of these proposals, and the affront to civil liberties they represent, they would demand an unprecedented mobilisation of resources, and would still not stop the virus. Tests are sometimes unreliable; they cannot take account of subsequent infection; and there is virtually no means by which segregation of huge numbers of people could be effectively policed.

The Thatcher government has not yet ruled out compulsory testing of immigrants, and it is still conceivable that it will make a symbolic gesture along these lines to assuage pressure (opinion polls suggest that there is an overwhelming public demand for compulsory testing of the whole population). But such steps will not stop the spread of Aids.

The two practical parts of Norman Fowler's advice to the nation – to use condoms, and avoid sharing needles – are thus not only sensible, they are essential. It has, however, taken a great deal of anguish to reach this stage. When Mrs Thatcher saw the draft of the first advertising campaign in early 1986 she is reported to have vetoed them with the comment: 'it's like writings on a lavatory wall'. Beyond this are a clear range of anxieties for moral conservatives: would promotion of the use of condoms promote promiscuity? Would mention of anal sex encourage the impressionable to try it? The minutes of Lord Whitelaw's committee will make fascinating reading in 30 years' time.

Even now, certain obvious steps have been baulked at. Advertising has not stressed that free condoms can be obtained for 'family planning' purposes. Despite the support of the health ministers, the government is reluctant to offer free needles to iv drug users from fear that it would be seen to condone drug abuse. Yet something momentous is surely underway. British governments have been traditionally reluctant to intervene too directly in the details of sexual regulation. During the last war millions of condoms were distributed to soldiers as a preventive against VD, but the fiction was maintained that these were to be used to protect the barrels of guns. Here, for the first time, we see a highly conservative government urging its citizens to use protectives, in a massive programme of sex education.

Sex education has been a touch-stone issue for the moral Right throughout the West. Publicly provided sex education has been seen as a means for the undermining of parental authority, and as a channel for the promotion of sexual perversion 'on the rates'. As the Thatcher government was contemplating its leap into openness in relation to Aids, it was also wrestling with attempts by its backbenchers to remove control of sex education from teachers and a growing controversy about the 'positive images' policies of Labour-controlled education author-

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'It is difficult to take Norman Tebbit's attitude on the permissive society too seriously when his colleagues are caught dealing with prostitutes and having sex in public lavatories'

Epidemiology of Aids

One of the most striking features, epidemiologically, of the Aids epidemic, has been the cliff-face rise in the numbers affected. (See Table 1). Since the first recorded case of Aids in the UK in December 1981, the figures have doubled every eight to 10 months to reach 512 in September this year. In the US the rise has been even more dramatic.

The exponential growth rate of Aids (a steady rise in the rate of increase as well as in the actual numbers) has prompted some wild statistical speculation as to how high the figures might go. Simply projecting the current rate of increase into the future would give an estimate of nearly a million cases in Britain by the mid-1990s.

But these kinds of predictions assume that the disease will spread as rapidly in the general population as it has in high risk groups, and that people will not change their behaviour significantly. Most epidemiologists are of the view that Aids will plateau out as a steady state is reached.

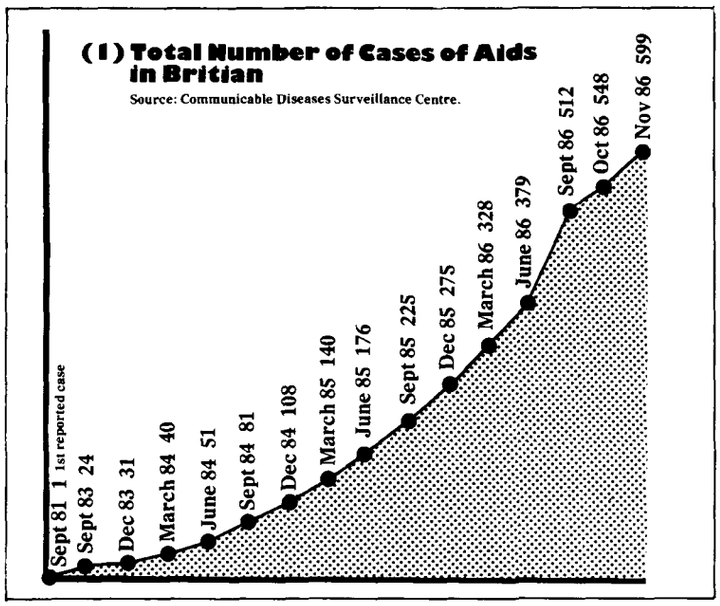
Even so, the rise in numbers is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Around 30,000 are thought to be infected with the virus in Britain, an estimate seen as conservative by some. The US figure for the total number of cases, which was roughly the same five years ago as Britian's is now, stands today at more than 25,000. (For international comparison see Table 2).

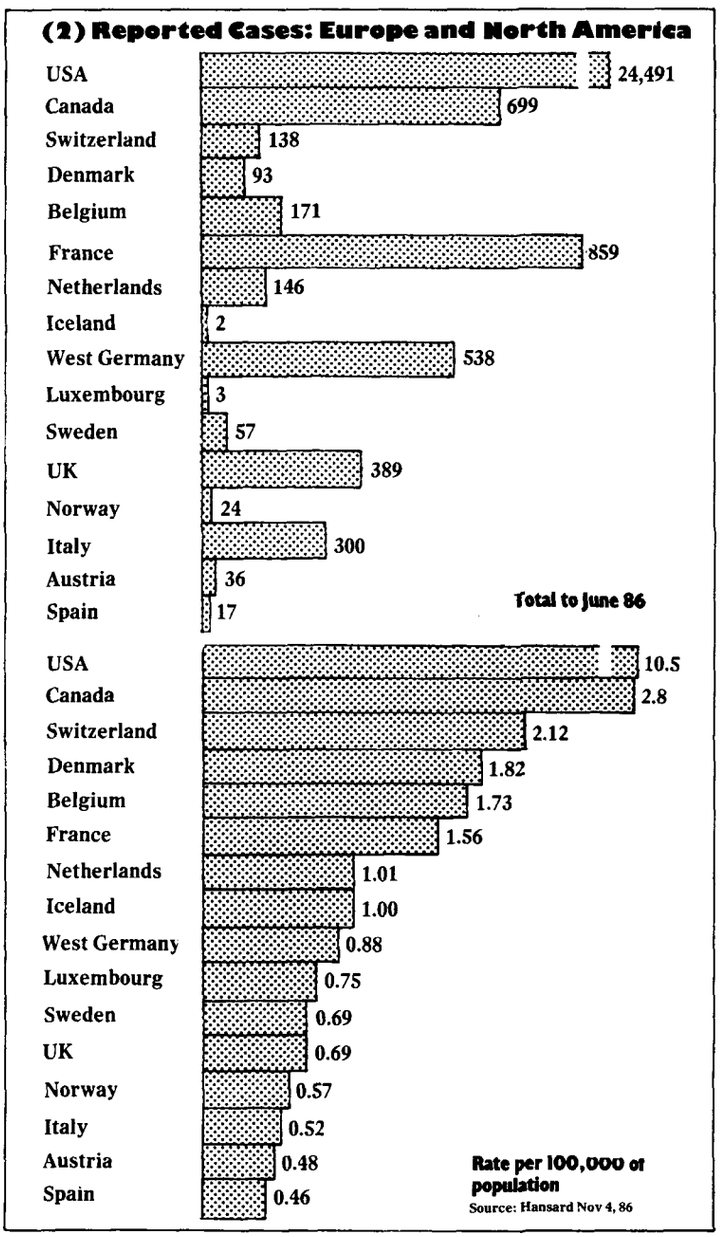
The spread of the Aids virus has moved beyond the risk groups originally identified as the four Hs (homosexuals, heroin addicts, haemophiliacs and Haitians). Official figures in the West have, admittedly, provided some grounds for seeing the disease as affecting mainly gay men. In Britain, for example, they account for nine out of 10 recorded cases and in America seven out of 10.

But there has always been ample evidence from further afield that Aids is just as much a heterosexual disease. In parts of Africa, Zaire for example, the ratio of men to women sufferers is 11 to 10, and cases do not fall into the recognised risk groups.

The African connection helps explain varying rates around Europe. Higher than average rates in Belgium and France are no doubt in part due to the larger proportions of Africans in the population. ●

Kaye Wellings





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ities. Simultaneously, the education secretary, Kenneth Baker, was pandering to pressure from his right-wing by denouncing a gay sex education book for children, *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*, whose main message seemed to be that gay men could be monogamous too. Yet now we witness the government attempting the biggest, and most radical, sex education programme of all.

The deep waters it is entering are likely to produce ever more challenging tests to the government's moral principles. It has been propelled by the potential enormity of the problem to go further in offering explicit advice than would have seemed conceivable only six months ago. It has done so because Aids has ceased to be a minority problem, or a problem of troublesome minorities. It has belatedly been recognised as a problem for the whole of society.

The only really important question we need to ask is: how will society cope?

The evidence from the gay community suggests that people can change their habits in response to a perceived danger, and a sense of their responsibilities to themselves and others. The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases has, for instance, dropped significantly – by up to 70% in some London STD clinics – suggesting the impact of a sustained community-based campaign for safer sex.

Many of the support organisations like the Terrence Higgins Trust and Body Positive (for those tested positive for the HIV virus) had their origins in the gay community, and are still to a large extent sustained by it. Clearly, if the public education campaign is to work for the whole population then continuous assistance needs to be provided for help organisations such as these on a major scale. (It has been estimated by British Telecom, for instance, that following the inauguration of the government's campaign in November, the Terrence Higgins Trust was receiving 400 phone calls per minute; its resources only allowed it to deal with one).

Voluntary effort, however important, is clearly not enough. The government has bitten the bullet on public education. It still has to confront the resource implications of the fight against Aids. Labour's spokesman on health matters, Michael Meacher, has estimated that the government needs to spend up to five times the amount currently allotted by the government. Aids illustrates above all the need for preventive medicine, for a first-class health service, for collective provision. Yet it has erupted into a political situation where all these are underfunded or under sustained attack.

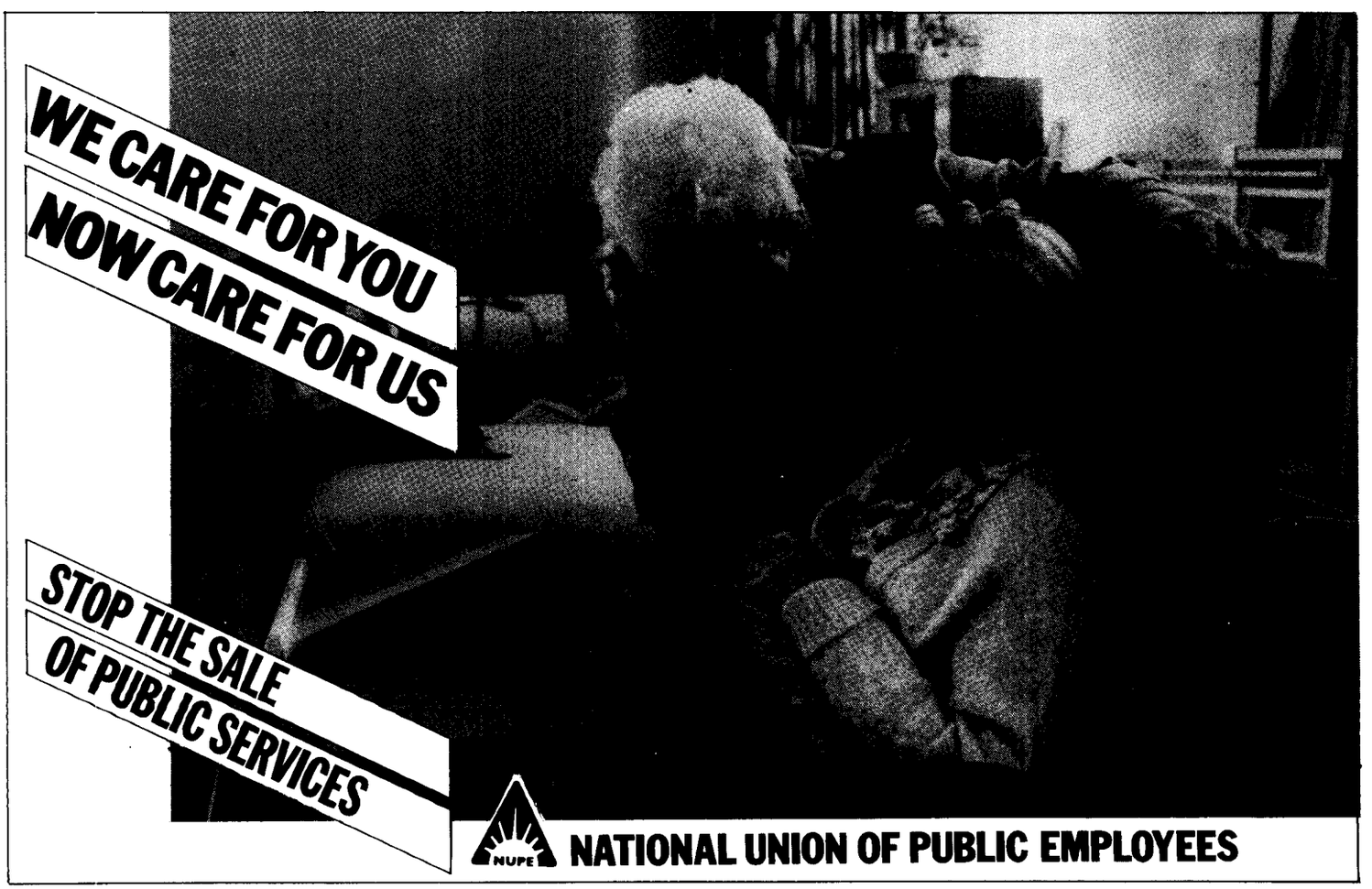
There are many other challenges. Insurance companies refuse protection to those they deem at risk. People with the HIV virus as well as those with full-blown Aids are finding themselves discriminated against in jobs and housing. Local neighbourhoods campaign virulently against the establishment of hospices for the dying. Children with Aids face prejudice at school. Even private hospitals, darlings of Mrs Thatcher's health policy, refuse to take Aids patients . . . The list is potentially endless.

'Yet now we witness the government attempting the biggest, and most radical sex education programme of all'

And looming over all these domestic problems is the possibility of a catastrophe in parts of the Third World, especially Africa, where Aids is caught up in a cycle of poverty and disease that only a massive redistribution of resources from the North to the South can begin to tackle.

Aids is much more than a medical problem. It throws a bright search light into the complexities, contradictions, divisions and needs of the modern world. It poses many difficult moral and political challenges. It is still too early to say how these will be met.

On the negative side is the evidence of popular prejudice and government sloth over the past five years. On the positive side is abundant evidence of commitment, courage and responsibility: from the medical profession, from scores of volunteers and from people with HIV infection of Aids themselves. There are two systems of values at play. The future history of the Aids crisis depends on which one wins. ●



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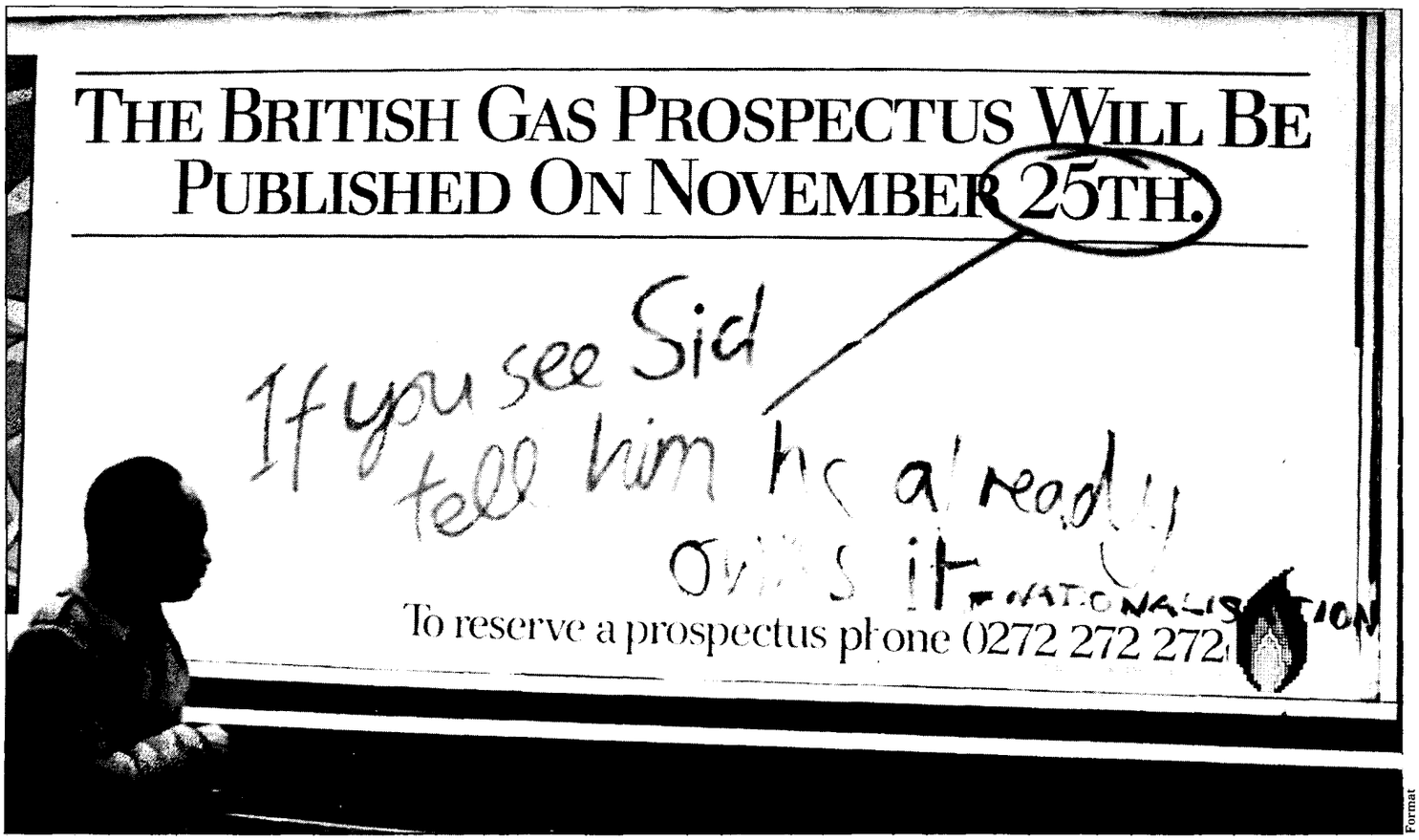
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Hidden message: graffiti artists subvert the British Gas bid to persuade the mythical Sid to take part in the shares bonanza

The Sid In Us All

Sid entered folklore. And with hardly a word about politics being uttered, the government sold the idea of share ownership. **Charlie Leadbeater** argues the Tories are playing for high stakes: they want share ownership to be as popular as home ownership

A culture of political consumerism has replaced grand ideology as the driving, unifying force behind the government's privatisation programme.

Privatisation, through the sale of billions of pounds worth of shares to the public, is at the forefront of the government's attempt to create a 'popular capitalism', so embedded in everyday life that it renders socialism irrelevant.

Popular capitalism is essentially a strategy to *accentuate* the capitalist in everyday life. At its core is an attempt to change people's attitudes towards their savings and investments – to make them aware that they are owners of small amounts of capital. Most people who save put money into pension funds, life assurance, unit trusts and building society accounts. Their savings go into a pool and are invested. But the link with the individual is indirect.

What the Tories want to do is create a direct link between the individual and business by making people directly responsible for where their investments go. 'By investing you are being a capitalist, but because you do it indirectly through a pension fund manager you are not fully aware of how much of a capitalist you are' – is the simple message of popular capitalism.

The government wants to nurture this capitalist consciousness through encouraging individual shareholding. Individuals will recognise their dependence upon capital accumulation – they will be more thoroughly co-opted on the side of capital through the identification created by being a direct shareholder.

So increasing personal shareholding is essential to popular capitalism – and privatisation has been the main means of boosting individual shareholding.

The Tories are attempting to engineer an enormous social change in just a few years. For popular capitalism to succeed the Tories will have to reverse the postwar decline in personal shareholding. In 1963 individuals owned around 58.7% of the equities on the London stock market. By 1984 this had declined to 22.0%. The number of individual shareholders had declined to about 2m at the time of the British Telecom privatisation in 1984. The most recent survey suggests the privatisation programme since then has helped to create 5m more shareholders, without counting the British Gas applications of around 4.5m. The Tories want to go into the next election with 10m shareholders – one in three households, 15,000 in each constituency.

The populist appeal of the privatisation programme has taken over from economic efficiency, the benefits of competition, and sound public finance, as the legitimisation of denationalisation. The advertising campaign encouraging people to buy shares in British Gas said little or nothing about the company and its prospects. Instead it was aimed almost entirely at the small investor to persuade them that investing was akin to consuming: to be without a share was

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akin to being without a compact disc or video.

The cult of popular capitalism has added a new dimension to the privatisation programme. It is a strategy which now works at every level of the government's politics. At the top it is part of the grand ideological mission – to push back the state and bring in the market. In dismembering collective institutions of the past the programme is a constant reassertion of the accusation of failure, and mismanagement, made against the postwar settlement.

At the same time, the proceeds from privatisation help to finance the rest of the government's programme. The sales provide the Treasury with much needed funds to keep the material supports of the government's strategy in place. The money raised goes to finance higher public spending on health, education, the police, and tax cuts, without the need to drastically overshoot the government's targets for public borrowing. The public spending plans announced this autumn, and the tax cuts that should come this March, are aimed at deepening support in the run-up to the election. Both moves are in large part due to the proceeds from privatisation.

Popular privatisation will also help to put Labour onto the defensive over nationalisation in the election campaign. Labour has to confront millions of individual shareholders as well as wider arguments about economic efficiency. After the privatisation of British Gas, Energy Secretary Peter Walker equated popular capitalism with the attack on Labour's defence policies as an election weapon.

And below all this stands the new dimension, the cultural and social change that growth in shareholding represents – little by little changing people's sense of themselves and their place in society.

So why are millions of people drawn to buying these shares: what do they see in it that they want and like? And what does this new found, often temporary, limited status of 'shareholder' imply for their sense of themselves: is it embedding a new cultural identity at the base of Thatcherism?

One crucial explanation for the collective rush to buy privatisation shares is individual acquisitiveness. The British Telecom, Trustee Savings Bank, and British Gas flotations were good ways to make a fast buck, with the shares rising to a premium in their first few days of trading. The British Gas sale may not have lived up to the government's high expectations – they talked of 10m applications for shares – but 4.5m is still a substantial number.

In most sales the government has deliberately engineered a low initial price which is almost certain to rise, thereby attracting small investors. One recent estimate suggests the government lost around £1,337m by underpricing the BT issue. The issue would have been taken by the big institutions at a much higher price: so £1,337m can be seen as the subsidy the government was prepared to fork out to create around 1.75m new shareholders. When earlier privatisations like the sale of Cable and Wireless were underpriced but sold to institutions there was a short-lived outcry; not so with British Telecom.

'For popular capitalism to succeed the Tories will have to reverse the postwar decline in personal share-holding'

Small investors' confidence in spotting and acting on a rigged good bet reflects the recent growth of general interest in financial services. With greater competition in the financial sector spurring banks, building societies, and pension funds into more assertive and sophisticated marketing, people have become more aware of the choices they can make about how and where to invest. Gone are the days when people felt their only savings option was to stick their money in a single building society account.

Just as individuals have good pragmatic reasons for buying the shares so the government also needs the small private investor for very pragmatic reasons. To sell £6billion shares in British Gas just to the big investing institutions risked sucking all the funds out of the market, depriving private companies of capital. So the government has turned to an alternative source – the private investor's building society account.

If the popular rush to buy shares just amounted to a confluence of these short-term pragmatic interests it might be easily dismissed. Why should it have any more impact on political attitudes and behaviour than the pools or betting? But this purely financial motive is at the core of a set of intersecting motives that have led people to join in the privatisation jamboree.

There is a sense of excitement in seeing how the shares move on 'the market'. The day after the TSB flotation there were detailed accounts of how the price rose and fell from a 100% premium. But it was more than the impression of wheeler dealing. It introduced people in a limited but very direct way to a world that previously they must have felt excluded from – the City. One of the great, closed, distant institutions of the upper classes was apparently opened to the rest.

Of course the irony is that this has happened just as the Big Bang, and the arrival of American capital has made the City irrevocably less traditionally English. It is no longer the preserve of young men from public school: it has become much more multinational and distant – both through the arrival of foreign firms, and the internationalisation of trading.

Buying these shares is not merely an instrumental act, aimed at reaping a profit. It also expresses something about the social status of the buyer. Those most likely to buy these shares are the beneficiaries of the unequally distributed economic growth of recent years: those in secure jobs, with good earnings and access to borrowing – the 'insiders'. Being able to indulge a new financial habit, with the near certainty of a good profit, is confirmation of the security and strength that comes with their affluence.

But it is not just a middle class habit: indeed some of the most enthusiastic takers may well be among the upwardly mobile skilled working class. It is no accident that British Gas chose the old-style working class name Sid for its advertising campaign. One reason for the TSB's success was its give-away price – but another was its customer base among the working class. It is they who have been pampered, seduced, made to feel special, by the expensive advertising campaigns. To not get a share of the shares is to miss out on something that everyone else is doing, to be excluded from something attractive and sought after.

This must be the message for the poor and unemployed who cannot borrow or save to buy shares, whilst directors of IBM mobilise their families to send in tens of application forms. So the policy is reasserting this new radical division within society between the 'insiders' and the 'outsiders'. It reconfirms the lines of the new fortress economy the government is creating: protective of those at work within the walls of the economy, harsh on those left outside.

The shares are also being marketed just as many consumer goods are, through appeal to social aspiration. With the act of buying a share comes a sense of power, that you and what you do matters. Private shareholding, along with holidays abroad, fur coats and the rest was once the preserve of the rich and powerful. The share buyers are being told that the world has turned in their favour: now they too can have something that once only the rich could have.

But the policy plays on another, more directly political, sense of empowerment. In buying British Gas shares people were not merely benefiting from, nor just participating in, the policy – they were *enacting* it. The transfer of an enormous corporation from the public to the private has mainly been *enacted* in banks and showrooms up and down the country. When small investors see that British Gas is being privatised, they do not feel responsible but they must believe they are making it happen.

Undoubtedly a major permissive factor underlying this is the deep unpopularity of the great public corporations which have towered over people since the war. Through popular privatisation these giants are being humbled. Their supporters and designers are paying for years of indifference, distance, and neglect.

The old collective institutions, which increasingly came to be seen as part of the state rather than the public domain

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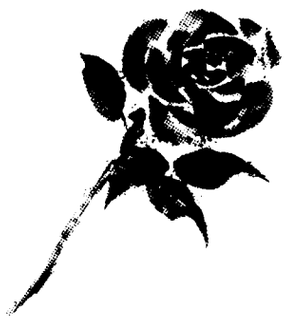

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from which they drew their name, are being swept away by a new collectivity – the rush of millions of people to buy shares.

It is the consumerism of popular privatisation that has made it so politically potent. But normalising share buying as just another consumer purchase has required the denial of any direct politics. Each night during the run-up to the British Gas sale the public was watching political adverts on television, but they were being addressed as consumers. Individuals were drawn into the political through something that stood in between – an attractive looking bargain. The indirectness meant it was a much more effective, rounded political tool than direct arguments appealing to long-run economic efficiency, or ideology. At the start, the privatisation programme was at best unexciting, at worst controversial – the populist campaign has turned it into a positive driving part of Thatcherite politics by normalising it. The shares are a consumer good like any other.

'Private shareholding, along with holidays abroad and fur coats, was once the preserve of the rich and powerful. The share buyers are being told that the world has turned in their favour'

The exclusion of the political is also due to the method of the policy. Privatisation is the state divesting itself of something and yet apart from the odd ministerial appearance the government and the state hardly appear on the scene. Instead Thatcherism has mobilised the banks, building societies, advertising companies and television stations as intermediaries to carry out the policy. The consumerist symbolism of the share sales has been made possible by sanitising the politics.

How should the Left respond to the power of this new phenomenon? Prior to British Telecom, Labour's objections centred on financial factors to do with 'selling off the silver'. The broader arguments revolved around trade union concern for job security and working conditions, and the future of social provision – would a privatised BT maintain the loss-making services like phone boxes? With the popular investment programme the Tories have opened up another front.

There are some good reasons for believing the Left should not take it too seriously. The relative failure of British Gas may set the programme back. The nauseatingly expensive, over the top, Tell Sid campaign may have irritated more than it attracted.

Another factor feeding the attractiveness of share ownership is the state of the stock market. Since the Thatcher government came to power equities have been on a rising trend. This cannot go on forever, and once prices start falling share ownership will go out of fashion.

Moreover there is not going to be any great rush into share ownership as long as there are such attractive tax concessions on other forms of saving, notably housing and pensions. Only when private shareholding enjoys the substantial tax concessions available on pensions and housing will money flow into shares. The government shows no signs of challenging the relatively privileged tax status of pensions and housing.

Reflex

Private number: phone kiosks being auctioned in Kent

But the forces of supply and demand are, nonetheless, likely to drive in the foundations of this limited form of popular capitalism.

First there will be a demand for the kind of safe share issues the privatisation programme has yielded. Continued strong real earnings growth among those in work will generate the savings for investment. Looming behind are the financial assets of the middle class inheritors; people who are already on the way to owning their own home and who will come into property their parents bought in the 1940s and 50s. The government is hoping that some of these assets will be sold and the proceeds will go into share buying.

There will be a continuing supply of share issues to meet this public demand. There will be more privatisations – water, electricity, rail, coal and so on. Also, of late, private companies have shown an interest in mass marketing their shares. Thames TV, Yorkshire TV and Virgin are just the first to attempt to use consumer loyalty to stimulate investor loyalty – if you like the goods why not buy the shares?

Moreover the City is showing a greater interest in directly tapping the funds of private investors. Big American firms have come there equipped with the tradition of higher individual share ownership in the States, and the marketing skills to sell shares to individuals. In a wave of City mergers, stockbrokers have been taken over by clearing banks with a ready-made retail network. Barclays Bank for instance can channel its customers' desire for shares directly to its in-house broker Barclays de Zoete-Wedd.

So what does the culture of wider share ownership, set off by privatisation, amount to? It is clear that while individual acquisitiveness is a crucial factor it goes beyond this. But it falls well short of the popular capitalism of new right ideology. This conjures up the image of popular capitalists enjoying and understanding all aspects of share ownership. They would be capital accumulators. They would manage their portfolios directly, have to choose where to invest, and thereby understand the nature of business risk. They may come to understand some of the power and the responsibility that goes with shareholding. This idea of popular capitalism envisages a world where most people are active shareholders – it is vibrant, energetic, risky.

In contrast the style of shareholding encouraged by privatisation is secure, self-satisfied. There is little accumulation because many people sell the shares soon after the flotation, and most of those that hang on do not accumulate others. There is little short-term risk because underpricing ensures a handsome short-term profit. In the longer run risk is minimised because BT and British Gas, for instance, have been privatised as monopolies, with a secure position to generate profits. As a consequence they are safe investments.

For these reasons there is good reason to be suspicious of the wider shareownership movement. But the Left's objections would be strengthened by offering some alternative to this individual form of share owning. For instance the Swedish Left has developed the Meidner Plan to gradually extend social control over investment. This can be done through increased taxes on profits or by the government effectively forcing private companies to issue new shares each year. The Swedish idea is to put the money into local and regional investment funds which would be citizen controlled. Each person would get a share of the dividends generated by the investment. But the investment fund would be collectively controlled, and yet decentralised, thereby outside

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The Share Story

(1) The Great Share Bonanza

Company	Offer Price (p)	Opening Price	Undervaltn £m
British Telecom	50	95	1.337.2
Amersham	142	190	21.3
Cable and Wireless	168	203	46.6
Jaguar	165	179	25.0
Enterprise Oil	100	100	0

The 'offer' price (first column Table 1) is what the public and other investors paid for the shares, ie, the government's asking price. The 'opening' price (second column Table 2) is how much people paid for them when the shares started trading on the stock market, ie, what investors were prepared to pay. The difference between the asking price and the price investors were prepared to pay, multiplied by the number of shares equals the amount the government 'gave away' through underpricing (third column Table 3)

The table below gives the value of shares owned by different groups of investors as a percentage of the value of all shares on the stock market.

(2) Pattern of Share Ownership

	1963 %	1984 %
Persons	58.7	22.0
Pension funds, insurance companies, investment and unit trusts	27.8	60.0
Industrial and commercial companies, government and overseas	13.5	18.0

(3) Number of Individual Shareholders

	Total number m	% of population
Pre-BT privatisation in 1984	1.75-2	4.5
Mori Poll Feb 1986	3.3	8.3
National Opinion Poll April 1986	5.7-6	14-14.5
Dewe Rogerson Survey Oct 1986	7	17
Abroad		
Japan		16
US		19
Sweden		21

The table above gives some idea of the impact of privatisation on the spread of shareownership. The survey figures, it should be noted, are all pre-British Gas privatisation. Until now shareownership in this country has been relatively low compared with many other countries.

(4) Decline of Shareholders after Flotation

Amersham – within one month from 62,000 to 10,000
Cable and Wireless 150,000 to 26,000
Brit Aerospace 158,000 to 27,000
BT from 2.3m to 1.7m now

The table shows that many people bought shares at the time of privatisation with the intention of making a once-and-for-all financial gain rather than becoming permanent shareholders.

the scope of the state.

But the urgent question for the Left is how the extension of individual share ownership increases the unpopularity of Labour's plans for renationalisation.

Of course Labour and the Left in general have responded to the decline in support for public ownership by drawing up a new prospectus for social ownership. This is positive but it does not tackle the central question: how to build popular support for a central plank of left economic strategy – nationalisation of some of the big corporations?

There are sound economic arguments for public ownership. At a micro-economic level it is good sense to group some productive activities together through common ownership to avoid wasteful duplication. It also makes sense to take monopolies into public ownership. Some industries, like gas and water, are close to natural monopolies – left to roam the market they would be free to exploit the consumer.

At a macro-economic level a left strategy to expand demand in the economy in order to boost employment needs a major stake in the supply side. High technology giants like British Telecom should be motors for growth, through innovating new products, and modernising the supply side of the economy to make it more competitive and efficient. These are good economic arguments for public ownership. The problem is that they are not enough.

The Left needs to develop the kind of dual strategy the Tories have employed to popularise privatisation. The economic arguments for nationalisation have to be buttressed by embedding public ownership in a sense of the everyday benefits it brings people.

Most people confront a big monopoly like British Telecom with a sense of powerlessness in two ways. They are powerless as consumers because they have no other option but to take BT's services, and products, at BT prices. They are powerless as members of the public because they have neither the sense nor anything near the reality of control over a *public* corporation. To make renationalisation of BT popular Labour must address this twin sense of powerlessness.

'Each night during the run-up to the British Gas sale the public was watching political adverts on television, but they were being addressed as consumers'

In its plans to renationalise BT Labour must make it clear that the government will stand on the side of the consumer against the monopoly. How could it do this?

The clearest route is to make it plain that Labour will not just allow competition and deregulation in some areas of the telecommunications market but actively *encourage* it.

Competition to provide the infrastructure of cabling does not make sense. Nor does it make sense to have competition to provide basic services like long-distance telephone calls. Competition between BT and Mercury in the market for business users has driven down the price of telephone calls for companies, but at the expense of the ordinary consumer. Here again there is a good case for little or no competition.

But there is a case for competition when the services get very close to the consumer – in the peripherals and equipment supplied. People's sense of control over their telephone services would be greatly and directly enhanced if Labour's policy meant they could walk through their shopping centre and have a number of shops to choose from to buy telephones which they could install themselves. The electricity grid is publicly owned but competing products are plugged into it. Why should not the same principle apply to telephones?

The competition could be regulated to ensure that it did not lead to an enormous surge of imports. But it would be good for BT which undertook little product development in the 1970s, mainly because there was no competitive pressure to make it bother to address the consumer.

Labour could also use public ownership to develop patterns of consumption which are socially beneficial. For instance particular groups like pensioners could be targeted for special subsidies on their phone bills. If public ownership is meant to fulfil social goals then make them tangible and direct.

So Labour must empower the consumer against the monopoly. It can do this through introducing areas of competition, or more directly through targeted subsidies to meet social goals. Rather than appear to collude with the giant state corporation, Labour must consistently attack it for the sake of the consumer.

What of accentuating the sense in which public corporations are publicly controlled? Under Labour's plans to renationalise BT the people who bought

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shares when it was privatised will be given securities which will bring a fixed rate of return. If all phone users were given these securities people would have some sense they owned these public assets rather than the government, and would get an income direct from the state corporation.

But this policy would need care. At the moment profits from public corporations go into the government's coffers to finance its spending. With Labour in power taxation and spending plans would be aimed at alleviating poverty and reducing unemployment. In other words government control of the profits would ensure they could be put to wider social use. If shares were handed out to everyone, regardless of their income, this would be a regressive move.

So just as the privatisation share distributions have been largely taken up by the better-off in work, the renationalisation share distribution should go to everyone, but be biased in favour of those on lower incomes. Why not announce that on coming to power all those on incomes below 140% of supplementary benefit (the poverty line) will be given a distribution of 'public corporation securities' that will carry an income. This might be hellishly complicated but it would be progressive in terms of taxation, and it would mean that some of the income going to the less well-off would arrive without the stigma of a visit to the social security office.

However this does not address the control of BT – control over its development and direction. Could Labour here develop the model of the ITV franchise system? BT would maintain and control the infrastructure. The government would lay down tight requirements on pricing, maintaining public services like phone boxes, and crucially, conditions of employment. But then the country would be split into 16 telecommunications regions. Once every eight years consortia would bid for the franchise to manage, but not own, the telephone service in that region.

This franchise bidding would ensure periodic competition over the provision of services with different management teams competing to run the service. However workers' interests and less organised social groups would have to be safeguarded to ensure that they were not trampled on in the rush to make a profit. To this end the public would have to maintain control of say 80% of the shares or securities in the North Western Telephone Company for example. The remaining 20% would be distributed between workers and managers to give them some material incentive to run the service more efficiently. But the managers would not have total control: that would be with the board largely made up of the elected representatives of the shareholders, and government appointees.

'To win support for renationalisation Labour must not rely on the economic arguments, but must accentuate the sense in which public corporations really are *for* the public'

The decision on which bid to accept would be down to the consumers/shareholders. This could be done through public meetings or by arranging a vote at the same time as the local elections – as well as voting for your councillor you would vote for the telephone service you want. The consortia would have to send out literature on their plans, run advertising campaigns – in short the people running the telephone service would have to pander and persuade the public rather than blindly ignore them because they are an unchallengeable monopoly.

So Labour's plan to renationalise BT should be augmented with these elements: the introduction of competition close to the consumer; targeted subsidies for special groups; a distribution of public corporation securities, biased towards the less well-off; and a regionalised franchise structure to mix localised control with periodic competition.

Labour does have a rich tradition of policies which have won popular support because they have had a strong base in the everyday. Child benefit, school milk, the GLC's Fares Fair policy all embedded themselves in some kind of popular culture. To win support for (re)nationalisation Labour must not rely on the economic arguments, but must accentuate the sense in which public corporations really are *for* the public. ●

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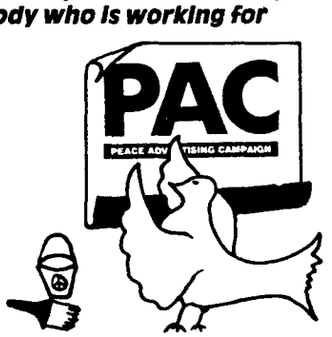

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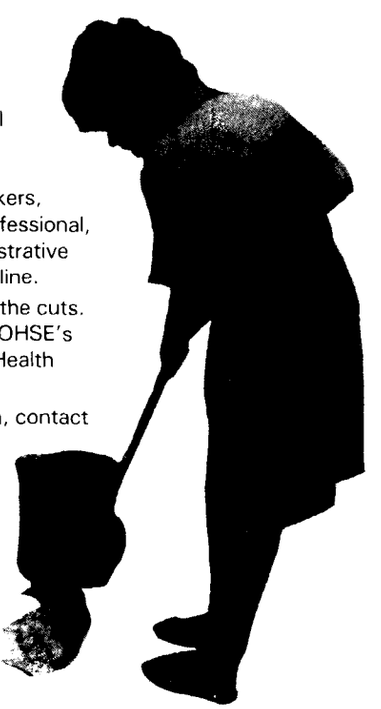

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The Cult Of The Gun

Terrorism has become the catchphrase of the radical Right. **Fred Halliday** argued at *Marxism Today's* Left Unlimited that we should see this ploy for what it is, but not fall into the trap of condoning all violence associated with causes with which we sympathise

Violence is an odious, but inescapable, feature of politics and political change. I would like here to focus on three aspects of the question of violence and politics. The first, despite the current frivolous left concern for fashion, is to make a few classical points which are, I think, still relevant. Secondly I shall say something about 'terrorism'. And thirdly I shall say something about liberation movements and violence.

I want to begin by making two classical points. The first is that whatever we say about the use of violence and the justification of violence, we must never forget that it is something extremely horrible and unpleasant. We must never allow the degrading tendency to develop of valorising the gun, of valorising the use of violence. We may think it is justified for others, but we must never allow the cult of violence, the cult of the bomb, the fascist theory that somehow it is ennobling or purging, or like a fire which brings out the best in people, to get a hold on us, as it has done in the case of quite a number of liberation movements, European urban guerilla movements and the like.

One may see quite a lot of photographs of Third World liberation movements in which children of five or six are carrying rifles. This is not something which one should ever condone or support. And the cult of the gun, whether it's the Thompson machine gun or the Kalashnikov, is a deeply corrupting one which we should guard very carefully against. Therefore, not out of pacifist reasons necessarily, but out of political and moral reasons, a deep sense of hostility and disgust at violence, and a reluctance to use it, has got to remain with us. It is something that the generation of the 1960s onwards often forgot, because they did not remember fascism. But those people on the Left who do remember fascism will, I think, have a somewhat more sober and realistic sense of this. The ability to discuss and disagree without violence and the fear associated with it is very precious and all too easily lost.

But there is the other side of it. It is this: that all systems of social power establish and maintain themselves in part through the use of violence. This goes for political systems – the state and the ruling class. It goes for the power of gender, and for systems of racial and ethnic oppression. And the point about this, and the point that so much of the public discussion ignores, is that the starting point is not the violence of the oppressed, it is not that of the working class, or of women, or of blacks. It is the violence of those with power. It is the violence of those who have got power through violence, who maintain it either through overt violence or through the threat of it.

History is warped if you see violence as being solely a problem of those who revolt using violence. The question is equally about those who maintain power using violence whether this is directed through state repression, or through rape, or through racist attacks, or through attacking strikers. Therefore the discussion has to be about the violence of those who are in power, as well as about the question of when and how it is legitimate to use it against them.

PLO: terrorist or freedom fighter?

It is sometimes said that some countries have had non-violent evolutions of politics, or their history has evolved non-violently, and the two countries that people are particularly fond of quoting in this regard are the United Kingdom, and the United States. But the British state was established through violence. We even had a revolution, only they don't call it a revolution any more; they just call it the civil war. Nobody now celebrates the anniversary of the execution of Charles I. But the fact is that England had a bourgeois revolution. Subse-

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Frank Spooner Pictures

quently the British ruling class maintained itself: it made concessions in the form of the vote to workers and to women, and in the form of independence to colonies, but only after there was very widespread resistance. They only gave independence to Ireland after a long struggle there. So this is a country whose political system has been maintained and established through violence. As for the history of the United States, it had a vast civil war, the first a modern war, to maintain its unity; it had used violence to get independence, and it has maintained itself domestically and internationally in a violent way. The idea that these countries are not violent is nonsense.

The question of violence is often associated with revolution. But it is not just revolutions which produce violence. It's also non-revolutions. In the famous book by the sociologist Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Development*, he pointed out that the Russian, French and Chinese revolutions were important moments of transition, and that there was considerable violence in them. But if you look at the countries which did not have violent revolutions, Germany and Japan, and look at the violence that they experienced in the 19th and 20th centuries, then the non-revolutionary path to modernisation is just as violent, and for people elsewhere maybe even more violent, than those of the countries which had revolutions.

'It is not legitimate to shoot hostages, burn children alive, or place bombs in shops'

The question of violence is inescapably linked to systems of political power and is inescapably bound up in the history of even the most apparently peaceful of countries. This remains so to this day. Anybody who wants to produce, or lead, substantial political and social change in a developed capitalist country cannot avoid this issue. The reason is very simple: the people who have power are not going to give it up easily. It is a myth, it is a nice comforting myth, to think they will. That was the most pertinent lesson of Chile.

This brings us to the issue of terrorism. It is sometimes said that one person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist. The implication of that is that it really depends on what a person's political goals are whether or not you see them as a terrorist. I do not share this view. It is relativist. I think there are certain general moral principles. It is not legitimate to shoot hostages, burn children alive, or place bombs in shops, in any circumstances. It is a very dangerous path to get on to when people say this. The Palestinian demand for a state is just: but Palestinians sometimes say, when placing bombs that kill Israeli civilians: 'well, everybody in Israel is in the army'. The Israelis say the Arabs are responsible for backing the resistance, when they bomb refugee camps in Lebanon. This is in both cases nonsense. Secondly there is a problem of the use, in the current international situation, of a series of tactics which are terrorist in any strict sense – the hijacking of planes, the placing of bombs in supermarkets and night clubs etc – which should be condemned whoever carries them out. I don't think this is a relativistic or unimportant issue.

However, terrorism is a bit like witchcraft. You have to ask why people make such an issue of it at a particular time. What are the political motives behind the scare about terrorism at this time? It's not that there have been more hijackings. The number of people killed in all the 750 hijackings in history has been about 230, which is much less than in, for example, either plane or car accidents. There is a political purpose behind the current scare about terrorism. And to say this is not to ignore the fact that there are problems about terrorism. The purpose is, apparently, to discredit all forms of resistance to colonial rule in the Third World, and to American foreign policy. The point is to discredit all those who are fighting for national liberation, as 'terrorists', as illegitimate. And this is something that much of the press in this country has participated in.

It also serves another function, which is to conceal the degree to which the United States government is itself pursuing terroristic policies. The Contras in Nicaragua and the Afghan *mujahidin* are terrorists. They are people who are using tactics of a criminal kind, and they are people who are by any definition terrorists.

So, there *is* a problem about terrorism: we can't just say it's all reactionary propaganda. But we have to define the terms on which we discuss it and our own judgements. And we have to see the political purpose behind the current hullabaloo about terrorism, which is in no way the most serious problem confronting the world. If we are going to talk about terrorism we should talk about the terrorism of Reagan, the South Africans and the rest.

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Two other points about terrorism are important to make. I do not think there is such a thing as a terrorist mentality. I do not think there is a general theory of terrorism, or even a general definition of terrorism. But if there is one thing that runs through it from the mid-19th century onwards, it is a short-circuiting of politics. It is a belief that you can get radical change not by strikes, or by organising people, or by convincing people, but by some kind of dramatic gesture which will somehow shake everyone up. You seize a hostage, America will change its foreign policy. You blow up a supermarket, the government will fall. Or even you blow up Margaret Thatcher and the whole British policy in Ireland will change. These ideas are illusions, mythical. The short-circuiting of politics is a refusal to see what is in fact required, the difficult path that is required, to get changes. The interesting thing about the history of terrorism of this kind is that it does not work.

It may precipitate greater repression as it did in a country like Russia in the 1880s or Argentina in the 1970s. You may of course get rid of a hated minister. But it does not produce substantial political change. I can't think of a single place where it ever has done. The philosophic assumption behind terrorism – that you can get radical change by a bomb, a hijacking, media coverage or whatever it may be – is fundamentally faulty. It has not happened and it will not.

The final point I'd make on terrorism is this. There is, indeed, a major problem of terrorism in the world today, a problem of gigantic and tragic proportions, which pertains not to the discomfort of air travellers in the West. Rather it is the spread of terrorism in communal situations in countries where you have a multinational situation. For example in Cyprus, in Lebanon, in Sri Lanka, in the Christian-Muslim clashes in the Philippines, in Ethiopia or in the Punjab. And Ulster exhibits the same problem. In situations like this we have communities living together who are bombing each other. It is a spreading phenomenon and it is a very dangerous one. It produces generations and generations of revenge, hatred and all the rest of it. And if we are going to talk about the political problems of terrorism, I think this is the thing above all to look at: the deformation of political and social struggles by inter-communal terrorism.

Finally about liberation movements. It is legitimate to support liberation movements and people who are struggling for independence, but not uncritically. It is not our job to cheer on everything they do or construe solidarity as providing good reasons for their mistakes. In that sense one has to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate uses of terror and of violence. The use of violence in a situation is justified if three conditions are met: (1) there is major oppression, and no possibility of achieving change politically; (2) you represent a majority of the people as far as you can see; and (3) you limit the kinds of violence that you use. All three of those conditions have to be met. I therefore think that it is legitimate to use violence against the government of South Africa. It is legitimate to crush the Contras in Nicaragua. I do not think that the Red Brigades or Red Army Faction are defensible. Nor is it legitimate to use violence in the Basque country in Spain, nor do I think it is legitimate for the IRA to use violence in Northern Ireland. In the latter two cases non-violent political expression is possible and those using violence represent a minority – around 15% of the population in the province concerned. I think one has to be quite clear that, if I might say, the softheaded collusion with all sorts of chauvinists, communal violence merchants, and 'left' nationalists, in conflict situations where words like liberation are bandied about, is often politically spurious.

'If there's one thing that runs through terrorism from the mid-19th century onwards, it is the short-circuiting of politics'

A final point: We are talking about political violence. Let us not forget the one which hangs over us all which is the threat of nuclear weapons. I think there is a four to one chance that we shall all be blown up. Maybe three to one. We shouldn't forget it. We're living on borrowed time, and this is no small part of the overall problem. ●

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The wasps are panthers terrorising all./The swallows scream and ichthyosaurs shout./The martins' whistling flows like a sharp blade,/Carnations softly beat their kettle drums. (Hunting). Anna Akhmatova: Your eyes

1987: 70 years since the Russian people had one massive party. Mayakovsky may have been the DJ. But he wasn't the only singer. Balmont: The bumblebees are bisons in the clover/Their heavy hum is like a bull's dull bawl./The honey bees, slow llamas, whine, drone over/

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This month's issue will see you through Hogmany. But because this year Chinese New Year also falls in January, we thought you'd appreciate a gift in Chinese style. End the Year of the Tiger and begin the Year of the Rabbit in an organised frame of mind. Pull out these pages and stick up in office or home planner.

A Selective History.

427BC Plato born. **1647** The Levellers rebel. **1667** Swift born. **1707** English and Scots Parliaments unite, and the Scots wiz robbed. Thomas Paine born **1737**. Frankenstein. Shelley **1797**. Marx finishes proofs of Das Kapital **1867** and Marcus Garvey arrives **1887**. 50 years ago Mickey Mouse was propelled to stardom. **1937**: Gramsci dies in a fail. 40 Years ago India went independent, and 30 Years ago Daley Bates took on Governor Faubus, leading to the de-segregation of Arkansas schools. **1967**: The Doors release their first album. **1977**: Never Mind the Bollocks, Charter '77, The British Road to Socialism. Chaplin dies and Joan Crawford throws in the coat hanger.

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ny discontent;/They lure into the light/My buried self,/Something the silence spawned,/No more to be endured/Than the noon sun in Termez./Pre-memory floods the mind/Like molten lava on the sands./As if I were drinking my own tears/From the cupped palms of a stranger's hands./(Your Eyes, Asia) Did I say two?. . . There by the eastern wall,/Where criss-cross shoots of brambles trail, Oh look! – that fresh dark elderberry branch/Is like a letter from Marina in the mail.

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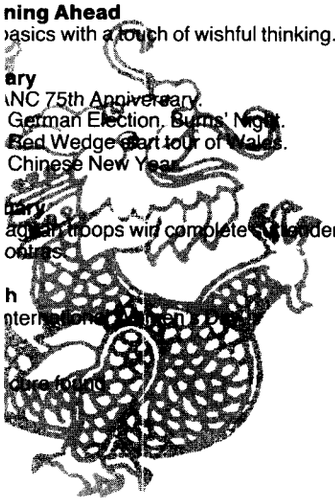

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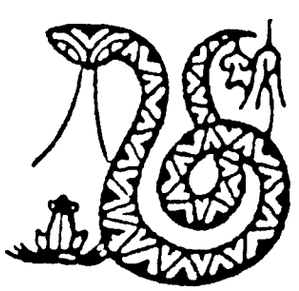

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July
first half: London Lesbian and Gay Pride m
Reagan impeached.

August
Polls show dramatic shift to Labour, now 9

September
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7-11th TUC in Blackpool.
14-18th: Liberal Party Conference.
28th-2nd Oct Labour Party Conference

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Band Aid: Is That It?

Band Aid transformed the politics of aid. In this interview with Noll Scott, **Bob Geldof,** argues that things *could* be different, that the attitude of West and East can be changed.

It's roughly two years since you started Band Aid. What do you think its main achievements have been?

Its main achievement, I suppose, has been putting aid at the top of the political agenda – the discussion of famine as an unnecessary evil. Plus maybe changing the attitude of a lot of people under the age of 20 in the West towards the Third World. In Africa itself then undoubtedly the legacy is in x number of people who've been helped to stay alive. I think that maybe we've also helped to redefine the aid business, and the way in which it works. Finally, it's making the idea of helping other people an exciting and novel idea, especially in a Christian ethic when you've been brought up to do that sort of thing as a duty.

This has happened when we have a government that is promoting an ideology of selfishness.

That's too easy. This government has an ideology of individualism as opposed to collectivism. Band Aid has been a godsend for both those ideologies, in that the Tories say, 'look what the individual can achieve', the Labour Party says, 'look what collective action achieves', the SDP says, 'look at the compassion of everyone', the marxists in Ethiopia say, 'look it's the proletariat not the governments of the West', the democratic Sudanese say 'it's the Western governments that care and not the Eastern ones'. So really whatever ideology you have you can fit Band Aid into it. I have the front cover of *Marxism Today* up on my wall alongside *The Spectator*, both of whom have managed to fit me into a slot.

So what comes next? You called your book *Is That It?* Is it?

I don't know, and that's why I posed the question in the last sentence. I often ask myself. There's certainly no more that I can achieve within this given sphere – the point was to mark the idea, to raise it to such a conscious level that it became a talking-point everywhere, whereby you had to think about it, if not at least contribute. And positing the argument that it was unnecessary and ridiculous.

So once you've done that, and once you've set up the organisation whereby you could put into effect the expenditure of the money, then I didn't see a point really in continuing with that exercise. Band Aid should never repeat what the other agencies do, it's not in the same game at all.

But you have acquired a lot of expertise, and on top of that of course you're very well known.

Yeah but expertise, it's like any profession. Once you understand the jargon you've cracked the code. What's the

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point of being a freemason when you understand the secret handshakes? And I think there's an awful lot of bollocks talked about the correct way of doing it. There's no correct way of keeping someone alive. You either do or you don't. And you're faced with x number of problems and you use your logic to circumvent those problems and if people get in the way of them, then you either circumvent them or you ride roughshod over them. That's basically it. And you help other people without hurting others and we've no vested interest in hanging around at all, which probably makes for more dynamic and radical behaviour.

'If you had King Kong walking down Oxford Street, he'd trample on Selfridge's, trample on all the people, but that's not in his interests'

But there are two sides to it, aren't there? There's physically helping people in Africa, and then there's changing people's minds here in the West. Now how transitory do you think the latter is? There was a fantastic wave of compassion that everyone was swept up in. Do you think that's changed something fairly fundamental...

I think that lots of people are less ashamed about the notion of helping others – I shy away from the word charity because I happen to believe that it's a moral imperative, which is a completely different kettle of fish. The biggest changes were with the schoolchildren who took part in School Aid or whatever. I'm not sure it's fundamental. May it's ephemeral, maybe it's just a fashion. I would tend to think, however, that nine year olds, when they're 22, will remember Live Aid in the same way that people of my generation remember what they were doing when Kennedy was shot. Because it's an emotive spasm, and they tend to remember that, the day everything seemed possible. So that might have some ongoing warm feeling, and if you seek to reproduce it, then nobody can any longer sit in front of their TVs and say, 'That's awful, but what can I do about it?' Now you can actually say, 'That's awful, and I can do something,' If nothing else it proves that you can shift things on this planet without having to be a member of a government and stuff like that.

Which is not to take away from the geopolitical nature of man-made famine, and that can only be solved by what Michael Manley called a 'quantum leap in imagination by the world's statesmen'. That quantum leap is not in evidence so far. At the UN it was tired old clichés. I was there when the Cubans made their speech, which was pathetically predictable, as was the American and the British, and the others.

What is going on in the Third World countries that are starving? Yes colonialism, but to a point, world armament shipments. Aid that comes with conditions, both financial and ideological, imposed on the backs of 14th century societies for 21st century ideologies. It can't work. Those people cannot meet those conditions. And aid in general is a perversion of the simple act of generosity, of putting your hand in your pocket because you see something on TV or read about it and say 'well, yes, I'd like to help that person'. Aid is a perversion of that. And aid benefits the donor countries more than it benefits the beneficiaries.

If you look at all those things, plus the rescheduling of debt, they are actually achievable. They could actually be stopped. Really, do the Soviets need to supply the Ethiopians with arms? No they don't. Who gives a damn who has the balance of power there. Who cares that the third poorest country in the world is marxist or democratic. Who cares? It's not even strategically important. They already have Aden. The United States has Sudan. So who's fooling who?

But isn't there a deeper problem with societies like ours, that base their wealth on the poverty of others?

No they don't. I disagree with you. In fact that's a cliché. The West doesn't base its wealth on the poverty of others. When the West needs a Third World country, there's a symbiotic relationship. Take Niger and France. France needs Niger for its independent nuclear programme, because Niger has got uranium. When you move from Chad into Niger, you move from a country absolutely devastated, with nil capital city, with Libyan bombers circling over and bombing it every Saturday night, to a country with clean cities, development and, moreover, less urbanisation which is a major factor in famine. Why? Because it's in France's interest to maintain a government in power so they can have the uranium. That's the reality of the situation.

So if the Third World has got something the West needs, that country will get rich. My argument to businessmen is: forget humanitarianism, forget the imperative to help. Who cares? Let's talk business. Imagine a wealthy continent to the south. Who is the first to benefit? Europe. There's no question. So instead of giving them $3billion in aid, which makes them aid junkies, imposing ludicrous conditions and then making them pay £9billion out in interest on their loans, why not say 'all right, keep the interest, we don't need it'. Develop the countries. And if you have a thriving market between the two, then you have two societies based on a mutual wealth. They both trade off each other.

I really don't go along with the cliché that because we're x times wealthier, which of course we are, it's necessary to keep those countries in subjugation. It's preferable to do everything we can to make those countries develop. At the moment we're not, because we're not allowing them political stability. Our aid imposes conditions on them, which they can't meet, which aggravates the internal political situation, and then which is stirred up by the Soviets and the US, and once again the whole thing falls down again. But that isn't in *their* interest either. That's the point. I've said it to the Soviets and I've said it to the Americans. It is not in their interests to interfere in that way, in the clichéd way that bumbling giants behave. If you had King Kong walking down Oxford Street, he'd trample on Selfridge's, trample on all the people, but that's not in his interests. It's the same principle.

So I think you need a redrawing, a restructuring of the ideological lines and it comes down to this: who actually gives a damn whether they're marxists or capitalists? Why not let them get on with it themselves and find an African solution to their own problems without us morally-imposing, politically-imposing, ideologically-imposing, financially-imposing conditions. Let them find a way themselves.

So you see it as a real possibility that those hands can simply be taken off?

They could be. I mean the question is why not, and this is where I get called naive. But if sophistication got us this far, then I'll stand up for naivety.

But people who have power – especially over things like commodity prices – don't want to relinquish that power.

Well, the market is what controls commodity prices, and that's the realistic world. If you want to bog it down with the workings of the financial system then you're going to end up not keeping anyone going and Africa will not be allowed to develop unless you, sitting here in Oxford Street, impose your idea of what the financial conditions of the world should be. They are what they are. They are markets. The world is a giant market, and by supplying people who need it, if you can get that market, then you make money.

Now obviously there are cartels that do that, but you are not going to change the financial realities of the world short of a revolution. You may say, 'yeah, well that's exactly right', but the people here do not want that revolution if it upsets their lifestyle, and their lifestyle is fair enough. What Band Aid did was make them, for maybe a year and a half, consistently think of other people's lifestyles. Now that cannot be sustained, because otherwise you become a complete bore, you become the boy who cried wolf and they say 'is there no end to this?', and you say, 'well, yes there is, but it is dealing with it on a geopolitical basis, broadening the financial system'. The commodities market isn't going to increase the price of sugar just because the Cuban economy is dependent on it. It just isn't. It's going to be what the market will bear, and if the housewife here has to pay whatever then she's going to say, 'damn it' and look for substitutes.

But it's not because of the mechanism of the market. It's because the EEC consciously goes and subsidies sugar and sells it way under cost and depresses world prices.

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But the EEC CAP is a nonsense anyway...

It is a nonsense, but it's because of that...
But it is having to change, because of the internal contradictions and because of the pressure – he says immodestly – which people like Band Aid have brought to bear, which allied to the famine made people think, 'This is ridiculous'. But I don't think that will change it radically – it'll benefit the West much more than it will benefit the Third World. They're not suddenly going to shift their agricultural policy to make sure that the Third World does better than Europe.

Don't you think one of the big problems with public attitudes is that Africa is still seen as victim?
I agree with you. I tried to get over that point with Sport Aid where we had them as participants. We had to fly in TV stations into Burkina and set up a national TV system to get it out of there. But then you had Nepal contributing £350,000. You had India contributing £1½m. Talk about the boot being on the other foot. I thought that was wonderful. There you had supposed victims seeing other people as worse off and contributing.

That is a critical problem, seeing Africans as victims. You're quite right. It's not normal for Africans to go around in rags. That is not a normal state of being for them and we just imagine it is because we see it on TV.

The charity business has changed a lot. I seem to remember when I was, say 10, it was really pure compassion, you saw a starving kid in India...
The guilt thing was a Judaeo-Christian ethic.

***That slowly evolved, so 10 or 15 years ago it* was 'Let's give them the seeds they need so they can set themselves up'. Now Band Aid seems to have pushed that a stage further, or at least been part of a wider movement within the charities, of taking some responsibility ourselves for the condition in which people find themselves.**
That's true. But I think that it has to be taken a stage further. By and large the people who work in charities are really good people and you hear a lot of shit about them, that they're all middle class and university-educated. So what? That never bugged me. What does bother me is that I've been in a lot of places where that attitude is very patronising.

I would like to get over that by 'Africanising' Band Aid, and we've started in Mali and Burkina Faso. We don't have a presence in any African country. We don't actually implement the projects ourselves. The other agencies do. We monitor what we're spending the money on. But we'd like to set up African aid agencies – for the simple reason of dignity and pride, for one. Moreover I don't think you can decide on a project sitting here in Oxford Street. It's not decided by us, it's decided by other people who are all huge experts in the field. But that won't do either.

'This is when I get called naive. But if sophistication got us this far, then I'll stand up for naivety'

Imagine an African aid agency working in Toxteth and the people deciding they want a new community hall. They went to the African aid worker and he says: 'I don't know about that, I'll have to check in Quagadougou whether you can have one.' How can someone in Quagadougou be expected to understand the problems of Toxteth?

So you have this huge moral distance and it just seemed to me to be slightly skewed. Now most of the projects do come from Africa but they're sent here and it's decided here. So what we'd like to do is use the expertise that is already in Africa by using the Burkines for Burkina and the Malians for Mali who can then go out to their own villages and sort out the things themselves.

Now of course the Band Aid Trust means that people gave money in trust for those that need it, so control of the actual money will still be here, but at least they will be able to decide for themselves which projects they want the money allocated to their country to be spent on.

So that is the next direction for Band Aid?
Yes, definitely. That's the main direction. We're checking it out in those countries, but if it works then we'll use it further.●

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The Community Of Women

On women, the European Community has proved, over the last decade, to be a progressive force. It has forced the Thatcher government to retreat on several fronts. But **Catherine Hoskyns** argues this development has barely been noticed by the Left.

In February 1986, the European Court of Justice (the court of the European Community) ruled, in the Helen Marshall case, that it was contrary to the provisions of European law on equality to force women to retire before men. Consequently, it is now unlawful in this country, at least in the public sector, to set different retirement ages for men and women. Four months later, in the Jackie Drake case, the European Court ruled that it was discriminatory to exclude married women from a welfare benefit that was paid to men and single women. As a result the government is now for the first time paying invalid care allowance to married women.

Those rulings received considerable publicity and, beyond those who follow these developments closely, generated some surprise. How was it that the European Court and the European Community had power to deal with these issues and that they came down on the side of women? What were the implications of the rulings? How should the women's movement and the Left react in these circumstances?

In fact, the two cases had very different origins. Helen Marshall (a nutritionist working for the South West Area Health Authority) brought her own case arguing European law from the start. Only in the final stages of the appeal process was she supported by the Equal Opportunities Commission. Retirement age is not an issue about which there has been much concern either in the trade union movement or among feminists. Nor is it clear what a women-centred policy should be. The ruling has in a sense caught activists on the hop and there is little agreement as to how it can be used to the best advantage.

The Jackie Drake case, on the other hand, was deliberately brought as a test case by the Child Poverty Action Group and formed part of a well-orchestrated campaign by the disability lobby over the operation of the invalid care allowance. In the months preceding the ruling married women caring for disabled people were encouraged to apply for the allowance writing on their forms: 'I am a married woman but I am claiming the invalid care allowance because of the EEC directive on equal treatment'. The European Court's ruling was therefore the result of, and related to, forceful and well-organised pressure group activity.

These cases, together with similar ones in other member states of the Community, illustrate the power which the Community is beginning to have on issues to do with women's equality. As will be shown, the Community has had a policy on women's rights which has grown and expanded since the early 70s. The impact of the policy on national politics opens up space and creates a fluidity which can be of benefit to women. However, the decisions which are taken at the European level tend to be narrow and legalistic and often seem divorced from the normal political process. The Jackie Drake case is extremely unusual in its direct connection with political activity in a member state.

It has proved difficult for the women's movement in the different states of the European Community to come to terms with the possibilities of this situation, or to work out a strategy around them. In Britain this is partly a result of the Left's general hostility to the EC. It is also that the scope and form of the European policy on women's rights is such that it does not connect easily with the thinking or the practice of the women's movement as this has developed since the early 1970s. Nor is the European Community set up in a way that makes it easy for grassroots movements to become involved in its activities.

However, despite these limitations the European Community deserves to be taken more seriously as a political arena. Economic interdependence has been increasing rapidly and governments are far more constrained than they used to be by developments in other countries and at the European level. It is already the case that some labour movement campaigns must be co-ordinated throughout Europe (and beyond) if they are to have any chance of success. The logic of this situation is that sooner or later the rights of workers, as well as those of citizens, will have to be fought for and secured at the European level. But as far as women's rights are concerned, a formal legal basis for this already exists in Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome and subsequent legislation and policy. The vital connection still has to be made however between these bare forms of words and the obscure political processes which produced them – and the real concerns and struggles of women throughout Europe which alone can give them positive content.

Before we can carry this debate any further, however, it is necessary to look in more detail at the origins and development of the European policy on women's rights, at how it relates to the aims and demands of the women's movement and at the impact it is having at the moment in Britain.

The policy of the European Community on women's rights springs out of the provisions on social policy included in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. Social policy was included in the treaty for two main reasons. First, because it was seen as necessary to take some action to cushion the effects on workers of the kind of economic restructuring envisaged in the formation of the Common Market; and second, because the objective of greater labour mobility in Europe required the opening up of national welfare schemes to workers from other member states. As a result, the European Commission was given some competence to begin to develop a European social policy in the employment field and to encourage the harmonisation of national regulations. The main rationale for all of this was economic, but there was also a desire among some of those present at the original negotiations to incorporate in the treaty a more overall concern with improving living standards and conditions of work.

These provisions in the Treaty of Rome are termed 'social policy', but they are in effect an employment policy and they deal only with the situation of people at work. Responsibility for all other aspects of life is considered to be the prerogative of the national state. This restriction perhaps helps to explain why women have found

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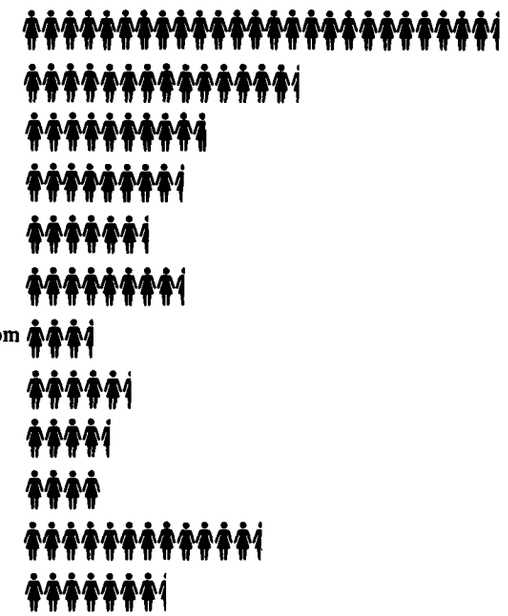
Women MPs: Europe

Country	% of Women MPs in Legislature
Denmark	
Netherlands	
W Germany	
Rep of Ireland	
Italy	
Belgium	
United Kingdom	
Spain	
France	
Greece	
Luxembourg	
Portugal	



Women Members of The European Parliament

Country	Women Members	%
Luxembourg		50
Denmark		37.5
Netherlands		28
France		20.9
Belgium		20.8
Germany		19.7
United Kingdom		14.8
Rep. of Ireland		13.3
Italy		9.8
Greece		8.3
Spain		8.5
Portugal		0

it difficult to take seriously the Community's commitment to women's rights since for women their position at work is so closely tied to their situation in the home. Such a distinction therefore makes little sense. It also prevents the Community from taking up those issues around which the women's movement has mobilised most strongly – in particular abortion, divorce and custody, and issues to do with male violence.

The provisions of Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome deal with equal pay and act as the basis for the European policy on women's rights. At first these provisions were regarded as merely rhetorical and attention was concentrated on the establishment of the Common Market and on removing barriers to trade. So social policy was left to one side. However, student/worker protest in the late 1960s, together with the need to accommodate the interests of Ireland, Denmark and Britain which were due to join the Community in 1973, gave a new impetus to the Community's social policy in the early 1970s. Because of the existence of Article 119 and because women were achieving a new visibility at national level, women's rights at work seemed an area where the Community role could be developed and expanded. The result was the adoption by the Community in the mid-1970s of the three women's directives – on equal pay, on equal treatment at work and on equal treatment in social security. It is the results and consequences of these that we are now experiencing 10 years later on.

'Women's rights at work seemed an area where the Community role could be developed and expanded'

Both the provisions contained in Article 119, and the three directives, are rooted in the idea of formal equality and equal treatment. Equal treatment, whether of goods, services, or workers, is one of the basic concepts upon which the Community is founded. Removing 'restrictive practices' so that women can 'compete freely' in the labour market fits in well with the Community ethos. But the emphasis on equality is not one which fits well with the preoccupations and activities of the women's movement across Europe. For since the early 1970s, the women's movement has sought to emphasise the 'difference' of women and it has concentrated on the need to transcend the idea of equality and set up alternative structures based on women's needs and experience. Such positive discrimination, or measures which involve intervention or redistribution, are much harder for the Community to adopt and this has proved to be the case with the women's policy also.

Despite this gap between women's needs and European law, the provisions are important. Firstly, they carry with them considerable legal sanction and this has to date been rigorously enforced. Secondly, the formal commitments have been broadly interpreted both by those who originally drafted them and by the European Court of Justice. So equal pay specifically included equal pay for work of equal value; equal treatment included the idea of indirect discrimination, and the terms 'pay', 'working conditions' and 'social security' have been broadly defined and interpreted.

Perhaps surprisingly, since 1978 it has been the European Parliament which has kept the policy alive. In 1979 after the first direct elections, more women MEPs came into the parliament which now has 16% women members compared with a far lower percentage in the national parliaments of member states. Some of the women had been active in the women's movement at home – others had been involved on women's issues in a more official capacity. A cross-party caucus of women MEPs met to discuss the issue of women's rights and began to collect evidence on the situation of women in Europe. They drafted an enormous and jumbled resolution which was adopted by the full parliament in February 1981. This resolution went far beyond the employment field and included provisions on equal opportunities in education, the funding of rape crisis

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centres and the availability of contraception.

But there is no compulsion for other institutions in the Community to adopt proposals initiated by the parliament. In this case, however, appropriate parts of the resolution were picked up by the Social Affairs Directorate in the European Commission and redrafted into the 'New Community Action Programme on the Promotion of Equal Opportunities for Women'. Reluctantly this was approved by the Council of Ministers in July 1982. The action programme gave the Commission a budget for the women's policy and enabled work to go ahead to implement the existing directives, commission new research and prepare new draft legislation in areas such as parental leave and occupational social security. Increasingly, however, the development of policy has come up against the refusal of national governments to contemplate new action in these fields or commit any financial resources to the achievement of equality.

'A cross-party caucus of women MEPs met to discuss the issue of women's rights'

One effect of the existence of a Community policy on women's rights has been that very gradually links are being established at both an official and unofficial level between women across Europe. This, however, has been stronger among civil servants and 'experts' and the more traditional women's organisations. Real and sustained contact has yet to be established both between the feminist movements in the different countries and between these movements and the Community institutions.

However, a start has been made. Since 1980 the Centre for Research on European Women (CREW) has published a lively and informative journal, *CREW Reports*, which spreads information and interprets developments at the European level in terms of the aims and objectives of the women's movement. CREW has also helped to establish the European Network of Women (ENOW) which aims to create links between more grassroots women's groups, to develop joint campaigns and to lobby both in Brussels and in the member states. In November this year, the European Forum of Socialist-Feminists met in Hamburg to try to develop a common strategy and have some impact on the policies of the European Left. All of these more unofficial networks are hampered by lack of funds and by the logistical difficulties of organising across Europe.

This background helps to explain the curious and contradictory effect which the European provisions of women's rights are now having in Britain. Since 1978 it seems that virtually all changes which have taken place in government policy on sex discrimination and equal opportunities have their origins in some aspect of European legislation. The effect of these changes has been patchy and only rarely do they correspond to areas of real need or relate directly to political struggle at the national level.

European law and policy affect government action in three main ways: through the necessity to implement the directives adopted in Brussels; through legal action which can be taken by the European Commission to ensure this implementation; and through cases referred from the national courts to the European Court of Justice. However, it is really only civil servants, politicians and experts who are directly involved in this interface between national and European policy. Only in a very sporadic way do trade unions, individuals or interest groups become involved.

The way this works out in practice can be seen by looking at three areas of equality policy where there have been important developments in Britain: equal pay, equal opportunities at work and equality in social security schemes. Each of these areas correspond with one of the three European directives on women's rights discussed above.

The European Community

Formed: March 1957, to create a common market, and remove barriers to trade and economic activity.
Founding Constitution: The Treaty of Rome.
Members 12: France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg (1957), Britain, Denmark, Republic of Ireland (1973), Greece (1981), Spain, Portugal (1986).

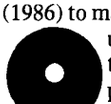
Main Institutions
European Commission: The administration of civil servants and experts, divided into directorates which deal with different subject areas. It has the power to initiate policy and legislation and to carry out decisions. Intended to represent 'the European interest'.
Council of Ministers: Made up of representatives drawn from the member state governments, who safeguard national interests. Its role is to discuss and adopt policy and legislation. Works at the moment on consensus and unanimity so each state effectively has a veto.
European Parliament: Has no power to pass legislation, it can only advise and consult. However, its influence has grown since 1979, when its members (MEPs) were directly elected by the member states.
European Court of Justice: The court of the community whose rulings are binding on all member states. It enforces and interprets all legislation, and has the power both to hear cases directly and to give 'opinions' on cases referred to it by national courts.

The British Equal Pay Act (EqPA) which came into effect in 1975 was adopted before the negotiations which led to the European Equal Pay Directive (EPD). British officials and politicians maintained that no changes were needed to the British legislation to implement the EPD. However, a series of British cases, referred to the European Court between 1979-1981, showed that European law did differ in some small, but important, respects and that British women were able to gain additional rights by making use of it. Though these cases were important in themselves, they seemed to be isolated victories and aroused little sustained interest either among women's groups or in the trade union movement.

Meanwhile, the European Commission was bringing a legal action against the British government, claiming that the EqPA did not give a sufficiently clear right to claim equal pay for work of equal value. When the European Court endorsed this view, the EqPA was amended but in such a complex way that it seemed highly unlikely that any women would actually be able to bring an equal value case in the courts.

Rather surprisingly, despite the difficulties, the whole issue of equal pay for work of equal value, and its implications, has aroused considerable interest and publicity. And, against the odds, a small number of important cases have been won. Clearly this law, however inadequate, touches on a deep-seated dissatisfaction and a sense of injustice among women in varied working environments.

Equal opportunities at work is another area where European provisions have had considerable effect though not always to the advantage of women. The Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) was drawn up at almost the same time as the European Equal Treatment Directive (ETD). Although it was clear that there were differences between the SDA and the ETD, no changes were made to the SDA to ensure that it complied. Here again the European Commission took legal action and the British government has been forced to bring in the Sex Discrimination Bill (1986) to make amendments.



But of spite, the government tacked on to this bill a provision to repeal all major restrictions on women's hours of work including night work and overtime. The ETD does require strict monitoring of protective legislation of this kind, but the European Commission has recommended that any change should be made carefully and with full consideration of the implication for workers of both sexes. The British government has ignored this, and has used European law as an excuse to

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abolish restrictions – but clearly with deregulation rather than women's equality in mind.

The European Directive on Equal Treatment in Social Security (SSD) does not correspond directly to any one piece of British legislation. However, recent changes in British social security law, for example the opening up of family income supplement to women wage-earners are certainly due to the European directive. The government has also withdrawn the housewives non-contributory invalidity pension because of the directive. But instead of putting housewives on the same footing as men and single women it has achieved equality by levelling down. The replacement, the severe disability allowance, has made it harder for anyone to get the benefit.

The implications of the SSD for the British social security system are considerable. It relates to a whole range of interlocking provisions previously exempted from anti-discrimination legislation. As a result, interest groups and women's organisations dealing with these issues are becoming aware of the existence of the European Community and are beginning to seek ways of lobbying more effectively in Brussels.

The evidence in this article suggests that European law on women's rights is now becoming an important factor in the struggles around women's issues in the member states of the EC. The British situation is particularly striking since, with a government intent upon deregulation and cutting costs, the power of European law has attained a higher visibility. Nevertheless a roughly similar situation exists in the other member states.

The effects that we are now experiencing result from policy decisions taken at the European level in the mid 1970s. Things have changed since then. The prevailing ethos among governments is against social legislation of this kind and the emphasis is now on reducing public expenditure, deregulating business, and 'freeing' the labour market. Since 1978 the Council of Ministers has rejected a series of directives on social policy. The British government has taken an extreme position in vetoing legislation on parental leave and part-time work which would have been of enormous benefit to women. And to add insult to injury, in June of this year the Council finally adopted a directive on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes, but in such a watered down form that the effect is likely to be minimal.

In the face of these attempts by right-wing governments to cut back on any initiatives for women's rights, there is a need for more concerted action by the women's movement. To be effective this requires more links among women across Europe, both to encourage greater co-operation and also to form a more effective lobby and exert greater pressure.

'The women's movement is now paying greater attention to the need for more formal interventions in national politics'

The peace movement already has an effective transnational structure in Europe and there is growing evidence that this is needed in other areas of social and political action. This is difficult for the women's movement with its emphasis on grassroots action and small-scale autonomous organisation. The European Community provides some kind of framework for such developments but contacts would have to be multiplied across a wide range of issues and organisations and in areas which go far beyond the formal scope of the European institutions.

Clearly there is much greater interaction now between European and national levels of policy-making, and issues previously considered 'domestic' are now being internationalised. All this demands much more thought and analysis both from the women's movement and from the Left in general. In this country the women's movement is now paying greater attention to the need for more formal interventions in national politics. As this article has attempted to show, an awareness of the transnational level needs to be built into such a strategy.●

For more details see Catherine Hoskyn's 'Women, European Law and Transnational Politics' in a special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* (Nov 1986) dealing with feminism and the law.

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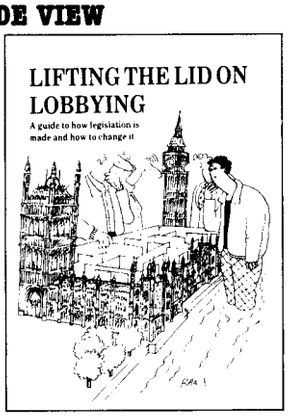

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CHANNEL 5

All Sport

Botham surrounded by the tricks of the trade, that have made his fame and fortune

White-flannelled workers

Even those most careless of the game of cricket have heard of Ian Botham. He's cricket's living news item. And, as an anxious nation witnesses his robust contribution to England's current tour of Australia and his bitter departure from Somerset County Cricket Club, this seems a good time to examine the social world of professional cricket that he inhabits, and his place in its history. It's a story, essentially, of *social class* and *ethnicity*.

Cricket's county championship was formed in 1873 but not recognised by the game's aristocratic governing body, the MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club, founded 1782), until 1894. The first-class game based itself on the localised values of the county and was administered by devoutly amateur patricians, thereby setting its face sternly against the professional leagues which flourished in the North.

Professional players, although in a majority at the county clubs, were subject to caste-like restrictions: they changed in separate dressing-rooms, took the field through different gates, ate their meals at another table and were distinguished on official score-cards by having their initials placed after their names. Pros were obliged to bowl at amateurs in the nets and to do menial tasks around the club. In the winter many of them eked out a living doing manual work.

This situation survived into the post-1945 era, when counties continued to employ between 20 and 35 professionals. County captains were always amateurs, usually educated at public school. England's first professional captain, Len Hutton, was not appointed until 1952 and he responded gratefully by trying (without complete success) to lose his Yorkshire accent.

In the changed social climate of the 1950s these master-and-man relationships seemed less viable and an increasingly impatient sports press told of ructions at the clubs. Northern clubs, surrounded by professional leagues, seemed especially reactionary in their dealings with staff. At Yorkshire, for example, professionals and amateurs stayed at different hotels and, according to Fred Trueman, a Yorkshire player in the 1950s, amateurs were paid more in expenses than professionals got in wages.

At Lancashire, captain Bob Barber also stayed in a separate hotel and was known to send players out of meals for not wearing blazers. When Barber left, Lancashire promoted Repton-educated Jeff Blackledge from the 2nd XI to captain the side, passing over seasoned pros like England's Brian Statham. England batsman Tom Graveney left Gloucestershire for Worcestershire when CTM Pugh was made Gloucester captain. Other disgruntled players headed for the (then) lesser counties of Leicestershire and Somerset.

The distinction between amateurs and professionals was abolished in 1963. Wage bills went up, at a time when attendances – especially at weekday county matches – were declining. In 1967 the Professional Cricketers Association was formed. Commercialisation became impossible to resist. 'Brighter Cricket' – principally in the form of one-day competitions – now became imperative, to attract crowds and television coverage. The Gillette Cup began in 1963 and Sunday cricket arrived in the form of the Cavalier matches (1966-8), then the John Player League (1969). In 1972 the Benson & Hedges Cup was introduced, and the county championship itself slimmed down. Clubs, led by lowly, petit-bourgeois Leicestershire, began to dabble in sponsorship on their own account.

The proliferation of one-day cricket, along with the admission to the county championship of overseas players in 1968, raised doubts about the national side. Enormous importance has always been attached by the MCC to success at Test level. It was a vindication of *Englishness*, as opposed to whiteness.

Pelham Warner, an England player of the turn of the century, once asked a bishop if it was wrong to pray to beat the Australians. He was told: 'My dear Warner, anything which tends to increase prestige for England is worth praying for'. Test matches against Australia, which began in the 1870s, have always seemed in recent times to have the keenest ideological edge to them, with the mother country seeking to assert its moral superiority over an ex-colony which represented an ungentlemanly and over-competitive brand of capitalist culture.

This ungentlemanly capitalism asserted itself with a vengeance in the 1970s. In 1977 the short pitched fast-bowling of Australians Denis Lillee and Jeff Thomson led

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to the adoption of protective headgear – now almost universal – by batsmen. The same year Australian media tycoon Kerry Packer, angry at being refused exclusive rights to the Test series for his Channel 9 TV station, organised his own series and signed up most of the England and Australia teams to play in it. To make matters worse for the MCC, he worked in league with the then England captain, South African-born Tony Greig, and, when Greig and Packer won a High Court action against the Test and County Cricket Board, there were fears of further defections by England players.

These defections were averted only when David Evans, proprietor of a large cleaning combine, guaranteed certain payments to remaining England players. But Evans proved to be no gentleman himself when, to the consternation of the authorities, he declared his motive to be not patriotism but 'the publicity'. (Evans is now chair of Luton Town Football Club and Conservative candidate for Welwyn and Hatfield.) The following year, a Test series in England was sponsored for the first time – by Cornhill Insurance. Although this was a gesture from the high status elite of finance, it must have seemed to the cricket authorities that few barriers to vulgar commercialism remained to be breached.

Ian Botham represents many of the things that those in charge of the English game fought throughout this century to keep in check. A genuine working class hero who, many of his admirers would be surprised to know, has endorsed Tory candidates and opposed socialism ('. . . because you have to go out there and do it yourself'), he has often disdained the English cricket hierarchy and their gentlemanly civilities. His brawny masculinity and fiercely competitive nature have, as the popular press have recently observed, made him almost more like an Australian player than an English one.

Yet he is also a hero in the English village green tradition – a batsman who, even in Test matches, is going to go out there and clobber the ball, come what may. This romantic notion of batting appears to have been behind the crisis at Somerset, for whom he has played since 1973. Ian Botham and his friend, West Indian captain Vivian Richards, Somerset have had two of the most exciting batsmen in the game's history.

But Somerset's recent record is not good and what counts in the modern county game is success: this alone attracts crowds and, of course, sponsors. Somerset captain Peter Roebuck, a ledger clerk of a player who accumulates runs unglamorously (but more often) and is reporting the present England tour for Murdoch's *Sunday Times*, has judged that in cold statistical terms retaining the highly popular Richards, and his West Indian team-mate Joel Garner, was not justified. He, and his allies at Somerset, must have known that Botham would go too, in sympathy.

The model of Englishness that Botham offers is sometimes dispiriting. He shoots animals and decries animal rights campaigners. He's aggressively masculine and a self promoter, having only recently dispensed with the services of an agent who had promised to make him a film star. He complains of the popular press but is contracted to *The Sun*.

But Botham is enormously generous – witness his charity work – and it's worth remembering that he's leaving Somerset out of loyalty to Richards and Garner. Their sacking, as I understand it, has no significant racialist element. But when last summer Richards received racial abuse from a crowd at Leeds (Yorkshire itself selects only players born within the county and despite the huge settlement of Asian families in cities like Bradford in the 1950s, none of them has hitherto been black) Botham was angry and unequivocal in his condemnation. ●

Stephen Wagg

The Art Of Decline

The Labour Party's policy for the arts contained in its *Charter for the Arts* and launched by Norman Buchan this month, is bitterly disappointing both as regards its ideological approach and its proposals for institutional reform. Further, it is not even clear if the charter will become part of Labour's election manifesto or simply remain a discussion document.

In producing the document Labour's leadership refuses to recognise the notion of cultural politics and the idea that art is a necessary instrument of social change. That's alarming since the British establishment has always realised and acted on the principle that culture both determines and reinforces ideology. Neil Kinnock's fabian approach which says that art is good for us contrasts sharply with Stuart Hall's argument: 'It's perfectly clear that if you can get hold of culture you can do what you like with the politics. The idea that we could have a radical movement of any kind in this society while the dominant cultural attitudes remain unmodified, is ridiculous. Politics is held in place, underpinned by certain cultural attitudes, which if they are left untransformed, will undermine every radical initiative.'[1]

Culture has to be the battleground of, and for, socialism. It affects all aspects of life – from what to wear, to how, and under what conditions, products are made and who makes them. It provides us with the very language we use and the images through and with which we represent ourselves. Culture is therefore education, architecture, town planning, ecology, etc.

The Labour Party – as Arts for Labour has found to its cost – sees the arts mainly as tools for campaigning. Red Wedge, a broad left coalition, is welcomed for that reason. The more seriously Red Wedge disturbs young people in its criticisms of society the more likely it is that Labour will distance itself from them.

Similar confusions abound in debates on style inside the Labour Party. Style in the way we live and the way in which we present politics is clearly important. But the quest for style can be conformist, reactionary even, and divert attention from more fundamental issues. Someone should tell the Labour Party that in the great cities of art, Venice and Florence, it's not style but conflicts of interest which matter most. There they realise that politics always has been and always will be about conflict. Conflict will not go away simply because one feels comfortable in designer-jeans and has no shame in watching *Dallas*.

Three other cultural battles look like being lost. Neil Kinnock is resisting the idea which has been agreed by Labour's policy-makers that our arts spokesperson should have cabinet rank. Since both the SDP and the Liberal Party have agreed to put this important no-cost proposal into their manifesto it would be monstrous if Labour were to join the Tories in seeing the arts as a fringe activity.

Secondly, Gerald Kaufman is resisting the idea of a unified and enlarged Ministry for the Arts which would have responsibility for the arts, art education, film, video and broadcasting. As shadow minister for the Home Office, Gerald Kaufman wants broadcasting to remain as part of, and be regulated by, our Ministry of the Interior.

The main and possibly the only argument – apart from the fact that the BBC would be an attractive part of anyone's empire – is that the Home Office is seen in Whitehall as the proper 'regulating' body. Policy on broadcasting is not apparently about art, entertainment and communication but is to be treated on a par with regulations on the opening hours of pubs, parking restrictions and fines for dog shit. Even Norman Tebbit, who has realised the political importance and effect of drama, is

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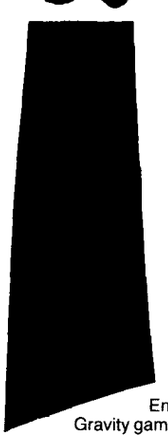

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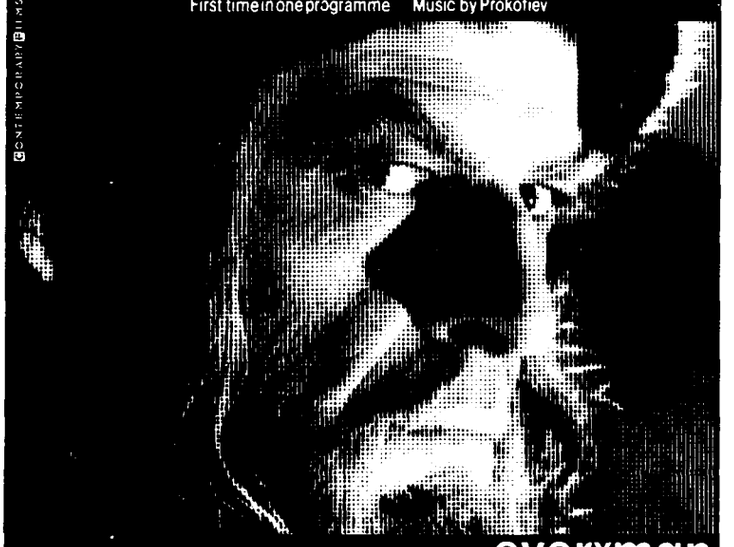

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not as naive as Labour's leaders in this instance.

Embarrassed by the absurdity of their position on this issue Labour's leaders have called in Messrs Mudge and Fudge who propose that whilst Labour's arts minister should be allowed to advise on policy, matters such as setting the licence fee, the appointment of people to positions of power and all those executive functions which give a minister political clout should remain with the Home Office. In other words Labour intends to maintain the status quo while, once again, the Alliance parties look like adopting the sensible and radical idea of a unified arts ministry.

And finally, Roy Hattersley, Labour's shadow chancellor, is resisting Norman Buchan's commitment made in good faith on the floor of the House of Commons to double the miserable amount of money spent by the government on the arts. One could understand Roy being a bit worried about letting Michael Meacher make policy on the hoof and commit Labour to adding endless noughts to the totals of monies that can be spent. But if Labour cannot commit itself to an extra £150-£200m a year for the budget for the arts then we should cease to claim that we are a civilised party. Surely we have a right to expect support from Roy Hattersley.

If these three battles are lost then Labour's policy for the arts will be in ruins and we will have proved ourselves to be doughty realists and good philistines.

For the rest, Labour's policy – spiced with buzzy phrases like 'ethnic arts' and 'women's art' to make it sound radical – is very much a depressing 'steady as she goes' one. Whilst Margaret Thatcher can change the world, Labour can't quite bring itself to abolish the Arts Council though it is prepared, thank God, to end the charade of the 'arms-length principle'.

Labour's emphasis on giving more money and power to Regional Arts Associations (RAAs) is surely right. But instead of allowing local authorities to nominate people to the RAAs (who will then nominate themselves on to the advisory Arts Council which Labour intends to keep), why not breathe some life and possibly more practitioners into the system by having separate elections for the RAAs?

Labour's proposals for local authorities also miss the point. We have too many Conservative, Alliance and Labour local authorities who just don't see the arts as important for Labour to be complacent. But that's precisely what its proposals in this area are. Specifically, Labour has rejected the notion that a statutory duty should be placed on local authorities to make provision for the arts. It has also rejected the accompanying notion that local authorities should be compelled to spend a minimum proportion of their income on the arts.

The first argument against these proposals is that they would represent an interference by central government in local government activity. However, all local authority statutory functions are by definition granted by central government. The second argument says that if a minimum proportion of income to be spent by a local authority on the arts were set, then those authorities who now exceed the minimum (like my own borough of Hackney) might be pressurised to cut back on expenditure. The validity of this argument depends on the acceptance of an insulting view of the courage of local politicians.

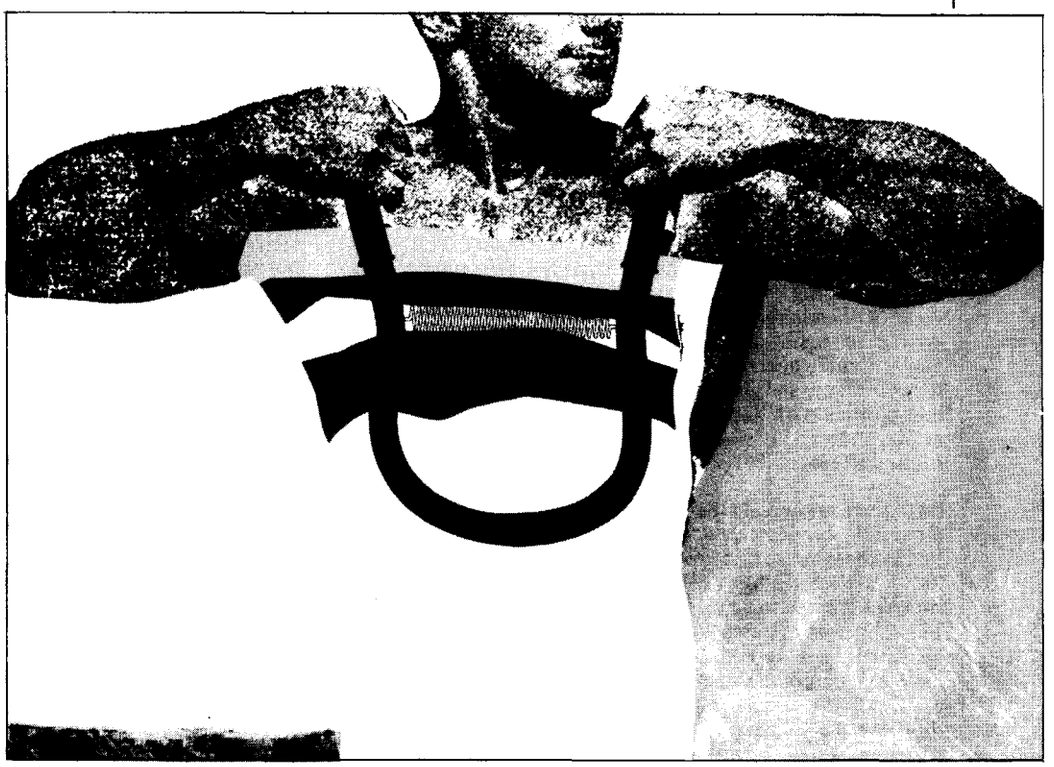
In all honesty the Labour Party has failed to grapple with a lot of the problems – probably because they have no real theory to guide them. There's been no attempt to integrate cultural policy into economic and social policy, no attempt to deal with awkward issues such as radical practice versus populism, no attempt to bring together community arts, ethnic arts and high art, and no attempt to make art part of the core curriculum in schools.

The GLC, along with the metropolitan counties had some good ideas which were difficult to execute because of a hostile government. They were on the way forward but it's far from clear if and how Labour will re-establish them.

Neil Kinnock needs to stir into life some of the 'callow nonentities' (Hugo Young *The Guardian* Oct 10) if Labour is to win the next election. Cultural politics is one area where that can be done. Culture could be a vital weapon in bringing about social change. ●

Brian Sedgmore

[1]At *Marxism Today*'s Common Pursuits Conference, quoted in *Art Monthly*, November 1986.



Adonis in Y-Fronts is the catchy title of this picture by Richard Hamilton showing as part of the 'British and American Pop Art' exhibition at the Tate Gallery, Millbank, London SW1. Pop Art was the 'enfant terrible' of the late 50s, which used all the ephemeral clutter of the consumer society to provide a critique of its values. It attempted to explore some of the tensions between the unbridled optimism of the Macmillan school of 'you've-never-had-it-so-good' and the unease which a more mechanised society was producing.

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Abel Lagos

Hanif Kureishi: portraying black people humanly.

Disposing Of The Raj

Hanif Kureishi is a playwright and writer of the award-winning film *My Beautiful Launderette*. He is writer in residence at the Royal Court theatre in London. He discussed his writing and politics with Janie Glen at *Marxism Today*'s Left Unlimited in November.

I'd like to start by looking at *My Beautiful Launderette* since that is what you are best known for. It's a very unusual film. How did it come to be made?
The film was commissioned by Channel 4. It could not have been commissioned by the BBC, certainly not now. I think we'll look back on the start of Channel 4 as a kind of golden period for films. People tell me that today the government is starting to exert pressure on the IBA to look at some of the things the channel is doing. They may be getting a letter any day from Norman Tebbit.

Channel 4 wanted to commission a film from the Asian community and, as I was the only writer they knew from the Asian community, I was asked to do it. The range of films that Channel 4 have now commissioned is really very broad: films that would not have been made on the open market. To some extent, then, I think the British film industry today *is* Channel 4 now. *Letter To Brezhnev, Mona Lisa* and *My Beautiful Launderette* were all more successful internationally than Goldcrest's *Revolution*. But who would ever have thought that a film about a gay Pakistani who runs a launderette would go down well in America?

How did the film come to get cinema distribution?
It was first shown in Edinburgh and then it was tried out in a London independent cinema. It took off and is still running in America and Europe.

How did Americans respond to the film?
When you ask Americans about British films and British life, they think it's like *Chariots Of Fire*. Everything moves very slowly. But their view of England also comes from what I call the Raj films, films about the old empire. Consequently, they have an image of the country that is totally out of date. When they see films like *Letter To Brezhnev, Mona Lisa* and *My Beautiful Launderette* they are shocked because England looks like a Third World country.

Many of the English people out there seemed rather embarrassed by the film because it didn't weigh up with the high status they have in the States. When we are seen to live in a doss-house I suppose it's rather disillusioning for them.

What about the racism in the film. Did that shock the Americans?
They laughed. They realised that England was going through something that America had tried to come to terms with 30 or 40 years ago. They couldn't believe that English people were so backward and racist. It was very shocking for them.

Did you get a reaction from the Asian community to the film?
When I was in New York I went to see the film. There was a huge queue outside – well I thought at first it was a queue to see the film – but I soon discovered that it was a demonstration of Pakistanis protesting that the film should be banned. They thought the film misrepresented Pakistanis as homosexuals. They were insulted.

Having been fondled several times all around the Third World, I knew there were gay people in India and Pakistan. There the film is only available in its bootleg variety. *Launderette* could never have been made in a society like India or Pakistan.

It's amazing how shocked people are by homosexuality. If you show the film outside London, or in America, you realise this. In one sense, therefore, it's a breakthrough to have got the film distributed in the first place and it seems to have helped produce a range of gay films like *Desert Hearts*.

On a different note, I had hoped there would be a similar breakthrough in black writing as there has been in the States but that doesn't seem to have happened. There is a sizeable audience for it and a whole range of stories to be told. That's why I get so depressed when someone like Kingsley Amis wins the Booker Prize.

Did you start off by writing about the plight of black people or a more personal story?
In the end I wanted to do a film about my family, about people I know that I like, about launderettes and business. It's particularly exciting because you realise how new the stories are. That's the point I'm making about black writing – that potentially it's such a rich source of knowledge. I also wanted to do a film that portrayed black people humanly. We're invisible in the media here and that's something I wanted to address. All of those things motivated me. Maybe that's why Channel 4 liked the film so much because they got a film about gay people *and* about black people. So it solved all their problems at once.

Wasn't it also a film about violence?
Yes. As far as black people are concerned, Britain is a very violent society. George Orwell's notion of England as a civilised place and of English people as quiet, tolerant and easy-going just doesn't ring true if you are a black person in Britain or if you've lived in India or Pakistan. Violence is evident all the time to black people and I wanted to write about violence in that way. When my father was walking around South London we'd always be frightened that someone would duff him up. He was always conscious of violence.

When I was at school my friends joined right-wing organisations and they would invite me to go with them on

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National Front marches ... that kind of violence is an important part of black people's lives in this country.

But black people's lives are also about love and sex.

I wanted to make an erotic film, not a dirty film. To me there's a very big difference between pornography and eroticism. Pornography is about the objectification of bodies, of sex. So I wanted to do a film about sexual relationships, but in a mild and gentle way. I also wanted to do a film about gay people that didn't end with one or other of the gay couple committing suicide... And a gay film that didn't have Dirk Bogarde in it, which is an achievement. So I wanted it to be romantic – a bit like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* with kissing – a film about men together, about men who were in love with each other physically.

Magic moment or gay shocker?

I'm very interested in the representation of sex in the cinema. Someone like Mary Whitehouse talks about sex and violence in the same breath as if she doesn't understand that sex is something that many people enjoy and violence isn't.

Many people don't see violence in their everyday lives whereas sex is something that many of us think about every day. Well, I certainly do. Sexual relationships are so important to our lives that it's crucial that TV and the cinema know how to treat them. Channel 4 have started putting ridiculous pink triangles on the screen as a form of censorship. It's like putting a fig leaf on a Michelangelo sculpture. Everyone should complain at such a stupid and crude reaction.

Do you see the cinema and film as an influential and powerful medium?

I find film a much more naturalistic medium for discussing questions of race, class and gender. If you can break through to a larger audience film can be very influential. We showed *My Beautiful Launderette* in Milton Keynes and there were a bunch of white working class kids who looked pretty violent in the audience. They were shouting for Johnny and whenever racist remarks were made they cheered him on. They liked the violence against the Pakistanis in the film. But when it got to the scene where Johnny and Omar kissed it completely blew their minds. Things like that can have an effect, a good effect. You can't control an audience but you should poke it up the nose as much as you can.

How do you see your audience? Are you conscious of wanting a mass audience?

In the late 60s and 70s people like David Edgar were trying to break away from the small confined audiences of the RSC or the Royal Court theatre. You took your plays on the road to reach out – 7:84 would go around the country performing – as if the working class hadn't suffered enough already! The only way to break through all this was to do your stuff on TV which was what Trevor Griffiths argued for: he thought that by concentrating on TV and cinema you automatically reach a wider audience. That is borne out by our experience of showing *Launderette* in Milton Keynes. It seems to me that the energy has moved away from the theatre to TV and the cinema, which probably isn't a bad thing.

What are you doing at the moment?

The success of *Launderette* enabled us to get enough money to do another film. It's about another minority group that are very rarely under-represented in the cinema – heterosexuals. It centres around three couples, one sexual act and the reverberations of this act on all the individuals. ●

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Lynn Hilton/Mail on Sunday

From Moscow to Muswell Hill: Stalinist chic for the apolitical.

What Will You Wear To The Revolution?

Designer socialism. Insult or compliment? The triumph of form over content or has, at last, the message found a medium? This one will run and run... What style commentators and pundits have ignored is that the Left and its myriad splinter groups have had their own distinctive 'style' for years.

The Left has not been lacking an image, it's just that it's not been up to scratch. Nowhere is this more evident than in the clothes and 'personal imagery' of our radical leaders. Radical chic is worn by hip, young apolitical dudes in Covent Garden, not those gathering at Blackpool and Brighton.

The Left does have clothes codes of its own. The consequent image is as much a clue to the political affiliation of the wearer as their newspaper. At the recent Left Unlimited event, *Marxism Today* was proud to parade these political clothing clichés in the form of a fashion show. So what does the Left have to offer the rag trade this year?

Still very popular is the labour movement suit. Its most attractive feature is its versatility. Our model's classic cut is at much at home in the conference centre as in the pub. 1987's colour? The same as last year's and the year before – grey. The seat of the trousers should sport a dull sheen. Note that the cut is loose and entirely shapeless. The trousers verge on the flared, the waist is low to fit snuggly beneath the beer gut. The shirt to be *de rigeur* does have to be nylon, and to finish off – that vital accessory, the beer glass.

Careful fashion-watchers among you will have noticed a growing trend or should I say 'tendency'. Trendsetter Derek Hatton has had great influence as the 'Trot at the top'. Soft leather jacket, cotton shirt in pastels, thin tie and sharp Italian shoes. The hair is worn long in a neat Kevin Keegan perm. This is a 'casual' look, suitable for the terraces or the rally.

Smart and comfortable this may be, but not the clothes to sport if you want a career in the Labour Party. If you do, try the 'realigned' look, fresh from the GLC fashion house and its top model, Ken Livingstone. Check out the 60s influence here, the flared trousers, the corduroy safari jacket and casual suede shoes. Fabrics are soft and crumple proof – this is the cuddly Left at its cuddliest.

What can the ultra-Left offer in the way of fashionable inspiration? Try the lumpen prole look, as seen outside many tube stations. The donkey jacket and shapeless jeans play a useful role in erasing any sense of sexuality and individualism. No deviationist enjoyment here. Essentially practical, it keeps the wearer warm on early morning picket lines. A vital accessory, a bag full of unsold *Socialist Workers*.

Ecologically aware? One really shouldn't be seen in ones 2CV without the green wellies, pastel dungarees and rainbow woolly hat. It's warm, sensible clothing for the countryside, so why do its wearers live in Islington? The only paper to handle with this outfit has to be recycled..

Perhaps you're more of a Spikey Sid rather than a cuddly Ken. Then try the 'anarchist punk'. Worn tatty leather jacket, torn jeans, enormous boots and T-shirt sporting the slogan 'Fuck off world leaders'. The whole image says 'I hate you and you can hate me'. Political and fashion sophistication is on the same level.

At Benetton *The Internationale* is playing over the muzak to welcome the Eurocommunists, eager to snap up Eurochic. With *Capital* in one hand and *The Face* in the other, these are the class warriors who will storm the barricades in Covent Garden (that is, if they've noted it in the filofax).

The irony is that Covent Garden is pushing 'political' clothing to the consumer hordes. Hammer and sickles on everything from boxer shorts to socks. Most of the wearers are unaware of the revolutionary origins of the designs. To them, Lenin was the bloke who sang with McCartney. Never mind, they'll look good at the show trial.

An over-indulgence in stereotypes? There is a more serious point. Clothes and the cultural and social mores they express have been thought important to past socialists. The emancipation of women meant not only the vote but also an end to the corset. Revolutionary Russia encouraged designers

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Pub or meeting: the labour movement suit.

to produce clothes that were both practical and attractive.

The fashion industry is a wonderful example of capitalism at work. Clothing is a constant physical necessity yet fashion is in a state of constant flux. It generates change to make money which involves not rejecting but recycling the past.

It is not enough for the Left to ignore the demands and tastes that this has generated. It cannot be concerned simply with the provision of clothing as a necessity but also its quality and appeal. People have to be able to express their personality through their appearance. The Left should know that personal politics has wormed its way into its wardrobe.●

Martin Pople

Glad Rags

Everybody has their favourite shops for clothes – often one where they do shop, and one where they would like to shop. Even if you don't intend to buy it's interesting to browse and see just how out of date your wardrobe is! Here's a selection of shops that might just take your fancy. . .

The Warehouse (Not part of the London chain!) They say: 'Glasgow's style is better' and here is a shop with a good range of designer clothes and accessories but you'll have to pay. Clothes £90-£400! Accessories £30-£100. Look out for a sale in Jan/Feb. 61 Glassford St, Glasgow.

Debenhams Wide range with something that will appeal to both your grandmother and your younger sister. Larger stores have shops within shops, such as Benetton, Dorothy Perkins, Burton's and Dash. High St locations.

Hudson & Hudson One of Cardiff's 'upmarket' shops with clothes for men and women, designer labels and their own. Separates from £40-£55. Dresses £80. Reasonably priced accessories, especially shoes and bags. Look out for their shops in London and Bath. Sale – 2nd week after Christmas. 98 St Marys St, Cardiff.

Collets International Bookshop A bookshop for political clothes! Good range of Soviet chic on sweatshirts, T-shirts, socks and badges. Wear your politics on your chest. 129 Charing Cross Road, London WC1.

Miss Selfridge Going upmarket with good and bad imitations of really stylish clothes. Quite reasonable prices and good accessories.

69a 50s and 60s 2nd hand, plus designer wear for women. ANC and SWAPO merchandise. Good value, trousers from £5, jackets from £10. 69a Renshaw St, Liverpool.

Joseph's Part of Leicester's 'Covent Garden' but without the tourist hordes or extravagant prices. Well-priced selection of men's wear, good jeans, shirts and suits. Silver Arcade, Leicester.

X Clothes Northern stockists of London 'names' (Willi Brown, Bassweejun, Johnsons, Sue Newall), with range of shoes and jewellery. Good selection of post-punk Gothic chic. Shops at 9 Duncan St, Leeds; 15 Chapel Walk, Manchester; 17 Market St, Sheffield and 25 George St, Hull.

Helter Skelter Eclectic selection of period clothes, PVC and leather, mainly for women. Be prepared to spend to indulge your tastes. 84 Mill Rd, Cambridge.

Workers For Freedom! Wonderful fabrics, mostly quality cottons and very light wools. Design has the best of Italian casualness mixed with Soho style. For men and women. But how many workers do you know that can afford £95 for trousers? 4a Lower John St, London W1.

Paul Smith English classics with a whimsical edge. Would you wear 'space invader' socks? Good range of accessories, ranging from boxer shorts to watches, pens and the dreaded Filofax. Although too

pricey for most, shops are attractive and pleasant – well worth a browse. 43 Floral St and 23 Avery Row in London; 10 Bayard Lane, Nottingham, plus new branch in Tokyo!

Marks & Spencer Worth a look for the quality of their clothes, styles from the unadventurous to the interesting. Keep an eye out for new range of women's underwear *à la* Calvin Klein, knitwear and thermal socks! Good exchange policy if you're lumbered with something dreadful as a present.

Top Shop/Top Man Classic teen shop with prices aimed at young market. Quality ranges from rubbish to good, note the sweatshirts and T shirts. Good accessories – some have 'designer' sections with French Connection, Stirling Cooper and Strawberry Studio.

Benetton The Yuppie shop, being 'smart but casual'. Quality clothes in bland pastels – why no primaries? Unadventurous and safe.

The Dresser 'Designer goodies at prices that warrant immediate action' *i-D Magazine*. 'Cast offs' from Dior, Crolla and Gaultier on sale or return basis! 39 Sussex Place, London W2.

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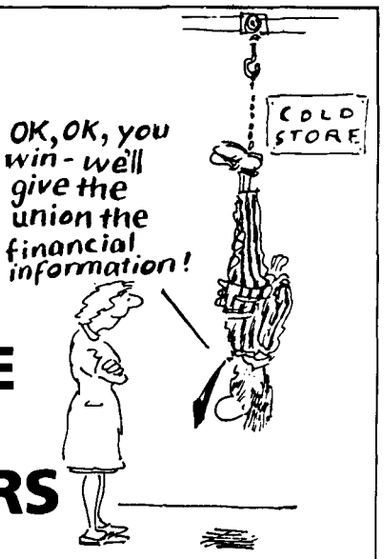

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Down And Out

The End Of The Street
Linda Melvern
Methuen, £9.95 hbk

Did 'Wapping' have to happen? In other words, was the pressure of new technology unutilised, markets unserved, profits un-made so great that sooner or later it had to burst, violently, the dam of two centuries' old printers' strength?

The antiquity of printers' resistance to technical change which would rob them of their jobs is attested to in Linda Melvern's carefully crafted study. In 1814, John Walter II, son of the founder and editor of *The Times* had a steam press smuggled piece by piece into Printing House Square.

If management was accustomed to seeing print unions as obstructive brutes and unions to see management as devious bastards 172 years ago, there has been little in the intervening years to prove either wrong. On the management / ownership side, the lure of owning a mouthpiece which could sway opinion and act as a platform from which honours could be grasped and social status enhanced, has proved to be a drug powerful enough to withstand the most shocking losses.

On the unions' side, the nightly perishability of the product has bequeathed a benign gift of industrial muscle. Result: a boozy, cynical, well-heeled, comic, creative, exclusive, absorbing underworld, most alive when most people were going to bed.

Once inside it, it was formidably seductive. It was a man's world, dominated by the East End of London working class who never ceased to be so no matter what their wages or, for that matter, their politics – and who never let either of these dilute their distrust of the management.

A man's world is attractive to most men, at least some of the time: the fact that those outside of it could point with justice to the high wages for little work, to the lack of any women in high paid jobs, to the finger-on-one-hand number of blacks in warehouses, press rooms, composing rooms, newsrooms and management suites – that all this was and still is a fact cuts little ice with the insiders.

It sometimes even worked. Some of its products are world class: I am partial, but I think the *Financial Times* is in that class; and *The Sun* certainly is. The reasons why the latter is so is that it does what it sets out to do – sell to and organise a mass audience – without a peer in any country in the West. The printing standards are high, very often: and though the place was rightly criticised for its massive inefficiency, it maintained a readership of a higher percentage of the population than similar papers in most other countries.

But it *did* have to change, and though it did not *have* to 'do a Wapping', it was an odds-on chance that it would. Eddie Shah's win over the National Graphical Association at his Stockport Messenger plant late in 1983 and his subsequent launch of *Today* with direct inputting, was a lever which opened up for all newspaper managements a window of opportunity to get progressively deeper staff cuts – Robert Maxwell's Mirror Group had agreed some 2,000 redundancies before 'Wapping' happened, while nearly all other groups had plans on the stocks which would have been thrown out of boardrooms with hollow laughs a year or so before.

But Rupert Murdoch, as Melvern well shows, was in a hurry: he was greatly overextended in the US, where in 1985 he had laid out $325m to buy 50% of 20th Century Fox, a month after financing a $2 billion deal for Metromedia. 'Murdoch', she says, 'was on his way to achieving a global communications empire spanning three continents. But to do it, he had to sort out his problems with his British newspapers. He desperately needed his UK profits. The golden goose could not be allowed to stop laying eggs'.

These eggs were already gold plated: *The Sun* made £26m a year. But, as Murdoch told his shareholders in the 1985 News Corporation annual report, profits would grow dramatically without disputes.

Melvern is at her formidable best when she describes the preparations for the dramatic coup which would bring Wapping to life. In 1984-85, Murdoch saw himself thwarted at every turn by the unions: his papers were plagued by disputes. A plant at Kinning Park in Glasgow, developed to print Scottish and North of England editions of *The Sun* and other News International titles, was not allowed on stream by Sogat, the monopoly print union in Scotland. The pressure was building up.

He lanced the boil by employing, in secret, a team of computer specialists. They successfully set up the Wapping computer systems, trained the journalists and other operators and brought it into service.

Should the print unions have seen the writing on the wall? Of course they should: indeed, they did. Melvern quotes Eric Hammond, general secretary of the electricians' union, using in his own defence a speech by Tony Dubbins, general secretary of the NGA, *in 1978*.

Dubbins had said that if the NGA did not heave themselves out of the rut of a union in which entry was predicated on a long craft apprenticeship, 'it will not be a case, like King Canute, of getting your feet wet; it will be a case of a massive tidal wave of changing techniques sweeping over this industry, with the creation of an alternative non-union industry or an industry organised by alternative unions'. He was right: but he had done too little to take on his own Fleet Street chapels.

Brenda Dean *might* have done, given more time. Less than a year into her job as Sogat general secretary when the dispute broke, she was a provincial (from Manchester), she was industrially moderate and she was a woman. Her formidable intelligence and talent could carry her over these disadvantages in the eyes of her Fleet Street members for a while, and the effectiveness she developed on TV and radio for speaking up for the interests of members, won some respect. But the hard men of her Central London branch knew from the outset she was not one of them. Melvern quotes Tony Isaacs, imperial father of the Sogat *News of the World* machine chapel, as saying 'What she (Dean) was trying to do was to have her executive committee run our dispute. They wanted to make all the decisions then just give us an ultimatum. A London general secretary would have understood the mood . . . we wanted recognition (at Wapping)'.

Implicit in the book is the view that the chapel leaders at News International have a lot to answer for. The Fleet Street unions were outsmarted, out-spent and outlawed: and though, as Melvern says, they could have done much more to learn what was happening and to act upon that knowledge, it was and is clear that the workforce of Fleet Street has now nowhere to go but down, and that the print culture of Fleet Street has nowhere to go but out.

Wapping *may* have unlocked a door which barred a multiplicity of papers. However, the smart money in the Street (and there is some) is on *this* kind of future: that the big groups will retain their strength, indeed see it increased as others go down the mega-profit road blasted open by Shah and Murdoch. If there are to be new titles, *they* will print them. But the cash released by lower costs will be used by the wiser of the big groups to fund marketing and promotion, and the small companies will find themselves at a continual disadvantage.

It is a compelling but not an attractive vision. It can be proved wrong only by the continuing vitality and talent of papers like this one, which provide something of a political base for more financially ambitious projects like *News on Sunday*. That's hard work, but it's worth it. ●

John Lloyd

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BOOKS

Beyond the Boundary

Shattering Illusions
Trevor Carter
Lawrence & Wishart, £3.95 pbk

Unlike most books of this genre, which have tended to look at what happens at the level of government and governmental politics, Trevor Carter's 'diary' is a record of what happens at the level of the street, housing estates, inner city schools, inside the police stations and more importantly, inside the rhetoric of the Left – thereby beginning to uncover the racism of the Left and of the labour movement.

This is a 'once-upon-a-time' tale, but of our lives. In three of the five chapters, Trevor Carter interrogates the political framework of the West Indian presence in Britain in three phases. The first phase covers 1954-62 and deals with the politics of assimilation and integration in terms of the effects on black people and the intentions of the state. The central tenets of this period were that immigrants were 'aliens' and that they posed a threat to the stability of schools and society.

Cultural diversity was only tolerated as long as it did not impede progress to integration or challenge the dominance of anglo-centric, white society.

The second phase, 1962-72, he describes as the period of cultural diversity. The advocates of cultural pluralism maintain that our society consists of different groups which are culturally distinctive and separate under the political authority of a neutral state.

What is wrong with this view, as Trevor Carter points out, is that it assumes that all groups within the plural society possess roughly equal amounts of power.

In the third phase, 1972-80s, the agenda he says is being set by black people. However the assertion that the agenda of race politics in the 1980s is being set by black people reveals one of the shortcomings of the book. The ideologies of multi-culturalism, racism awareness training and anti-racism, which have become the mainstay of the race politics of the 80s, have nothing in common with the business of the black struggle, nor are they shaped or formed by the black experience.

I would argue that the race politics of the 80s has been heavily influenced by the growth of and efficient professionalisation of 'race' issues – that have been described elsewhere as the bureaucratic conversion of community struggles into respectable professional occupations. Multi-culturalism, anti-racism and racism awareness training are just a small part of a whole set of strategies which are to do with the management of black people and black struggles via Scarmanite policies. Black experiences and struggles transcend anti-racism and are not reducible to 'a fight against racism'.

A second problem with the book is brought out by its sub-title ('West Indians in British politics'). By opting to remain within the boundaries of his own historical resources, Trevor Carter fails to recognise that the black tradition and black struggles are also of Africa, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The common struggles around blackness in different parts of the world, with a common history of colonialism and underdevelopment have shaped black politics here in Britain. The absence of this dimension could be misread as an affirmation of an ethnicity which accepts racial and ethnic categories as absolutes rather than as historical, and which refutes altogether the idea of a common struggle. This is compounded by the Left's own failure to perceive the ways in which race underpins working class consciousness, this is a failure the book fails to adequately address. That task is all the more essential in the face of the Left's continuing inability to make a distinction between anti-racism and black struggles. ●

George Shire

Damaged Goods

Sinclair And The 'Sunrise' Technology
Ian Adamson and Richard Kennedy
Penguin, £3.95 pbk

A few years ago, an opinion poll showed that the British public regarded Clive Sinclair as one of the top ten scientists of all time. This bizarre over-estimate of Sinclair's importance tells us something important about the potential of clever marketing – and something sad about the British educational system. But the full Sinclair saga, told well by Adamson and Kennedy, also has powerful lessons for anyone interested in British economic failure and Britain's feeble position as a world technological power.

For the reason why Sinclair shines out as Britain's best-known high technology entrepreneur has nothing to do with the two skills which normally make companies succeed in advanced industries – innovation and quality. Over the years Sinclair has produced unoriginal goods which have mostly worked badly if at all, made them in ill-run factories with no proper management or quality control, and sold them at the bottom end of the market. The culmination in 1984 and 1985 was the launch of the QL computer – before it existed – and of the C5 electric carpet slipper, which was useless mainly because it incorporated only highly traditional battery technology.

As Adamson and Kennedy tell it, it is no surprise that Sinclair has finally been bought out this year by Amstrad – another British firm of humble origins, this time run on strict cost control, cheap foreign labour, and ruthless quality and marketing methods. For these are exactly the qualities which Sinclair has always lacked. With his origins in the ham electronics business, Sinclair is used to dealing with customers who can be used to capitalise the firm by waiting months for goods, and who regard it as all part of the game if what finally arrives fails to work.

This would not matter if information technology itself were a sideshow. But it isn't, of course – it is possibly the leading industry of the coming decade, and one in which the UK had a trade deficit of £1.25 billion in 1985. Labour Party plans for British Telecom and the rest of the British information technology industry have to cope with severe British weakness in all information technology areas. One symptom is the way in which the Japanese have produced Mitsubishi and Sony, and the Americans Apple, while all we can run to is Uncle Clive.

Britain's National Enterprise Board (NEB) backed various information technology businesses including Sinclair (a fiasco), Inmos (a partial success) and ICL (a reasonable success considering the overwhelming strength of IBM), but its planned successor bodies next time round will be in a world where far more vision and far more money will be needed. Firms not up to global standards of technology are now at a fatal disadvantage in the information technology world.

Oddly enough, Sinclair may just have a role in all this. His newest project, a portable telephone using the latest 'wafer-scale' technology, may for once be a genuine first. If it is, the promise is immense. But if a Labour government backs him again, some care will still be needed. The NEB found Sinclair Radionics giving money to the Conservative Party while it was being funded as part of Labour's industrial policy. Typically enough, Sinclair seems to have passed the episode off as a mild eccentricity. ●

Martin Ince

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Guarded Optimism

Martin Walker is only the third resident correspondent *The Guardian* has sent to Moscow. To follow in the footsteps of Arthur Ransome and Malcolm Muggeridge must have been a daunting prospect. It is still true, however, that despite better communications and the passage of time, the Soviet Union remains remarkably unknown to the outside world and that despite the restrictions, there is plenty for an enterprising journalist to tell as *Martin Walker* must have found in writing **The Waking Giant – The Soviet Union under Gorbachev** *(Michael Joseph, £14.95 hbk).*

There have been some good journalistic accounts (notably Hedrick Smith's now rather dated *The Russians*) which have brought many everyday aspects of Russian and Soviet life before a wider audience, and the TV teams are beginning to give us glimpses of different aspects of Soviet society.

Martin Walker, however, does not attempt to describe everyday life in Moscow or in the far flung republics. His is rather, a political account, an attempt to describe the social and political changes since the second world war and, in particular, those of the past 20 years. His aim is to outline the political and intellectual environment in which the elite operates, and, specifically, to set the Gorbachev leadership in context.

The problems brought to the fore by the computer revolution, by an ailing economy, and the arms race are all dealt with. Foreign affairs, the social background of the new politicians, and cultural developments, are all described. His is a good, readable account, one which has the great merit of bringing the reader right into the events of the past year yet linking them with their long-term antecedents. It is a measured, even-handed account – guardedly optimistic that the social revolution will produce a more open-minded political leadership.

A reform-minded intellectual in the Soviet Union might agree with much of this. I am less sure than Martin Walker that the presence of educated politicians in a more modern and stable society warrants any predictions about political developments, but I would recommend the book to anyone who wishes to understand the situation Gorbachev has inherited and his attempts at reform. ●

Mary McAuley

Political Communications

Books about general elections can have a distorting effect on the writing of political history. They tend to make the elections seem more important than the politics. In other words, they put more weight on the three or four weeks of campaigning than on the three, four or even five years of politics in Britain.

Since the general election of 1945 we have had the Nuffield series under the auspices of Dr David Butler. Since the election of 1979 we also have a new series under Professor Ivor Crewe (in this case, **Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 1983,** *Cambridge University Press, £25),* though so inbred is the genre that the first chapter is written by Dr Butler. Most of it is the result of a seminar held at the University of Essex as long ago as January 1984, so it has taken a long time to produce.

Quite the best contribution comes from Cecil Parkinson, not because he is more learned but because, as chairman of the Conservative Party, he was a practitioner. He sensed that the Tories could win an early general election when Labour only narrowly won the by-election in Birmingham Northfield in October 1982. But it still took a long time to convince the prime minister and the decision to go on June 9 was taken only on May 8.

For the rest, this is a book about margins; deviations in opinion polls and so on. As such, it is marginally interesting. Politics is about long-term swings and trends. ●

Malcolm Rutherford

A Sailor's Tale

Gabriel García Marquez is renowned in his novels for leading us into a world of apparent fantasy. We struggle with complicated narratives trying at the same time to keep track of numerous characters who bear the same name, following their exploits which are designed to take our imaginations to their absolute limits. Underlying the fantasy, however, there has always been a sharp, humorous and often sad portrayal of the many sides of life in Latin America.

The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor *Jonathan Cape (£8.95 hbk)* is a departure from the tradition of the novels of Marquez. To begin with, it is a true tale which is not strictly 'by' him. He gives birth to the story on behalf of one Alejandro Velasco. Moreover, the narrative, because it has to reflect Velasco, is pared down to a bare simplicity.

The tale is one of survival. Velasco was a member of the Colombian navy who fell overboard from his ship into the Caribbean sea and miraculously survived 10 days without food or water on a drifting raft. The book is the reconstructed story of those 10 days.

A departure for Marquez all this may be, but the very best of him is not lost on the way. The skills he employs to allow the peoples of Latin America to speak for themselves are utilised here to recapture the horror of Velasco's existence at sea so that you can feel your own survival instincts emerge, urging the young sailor to keep going.

However, it is not a book to be embarked upon lightly by those of delicate constitution. One glimpse at the passage where Velasco kills by hand an overfriendly seagull will show you what I mean. ●

Diane Dixon

Setting the Record Straight

Fifty years after the Spanish civil war, *Jim Fyrth* has produced the first full account of the Aid Spain movement of 1936-39. **The Signal Was Spain,** published by *Lawrence and Wishart (£6.95 pbk),* is a brilliantly readable book which sets the record straight.

The work of the 200 British men and women who served in the medical units, recorded through diaries, letters and scores of interviews with survivors, forms a vivid, heartbreaking story.

The campaigns in Britain to collect money, food and medical supplies, to organise homes for 4000 Basque refugee children and support for the families of International Brigades, brought together in various ways everyone from communists to conservatives. The movement raised unprecedented amounts in cash and kind. The tensions and divisions inevitable in such a broad movement fall into perspective within the impressive constructive results and the degree of practical co-operation achieved.

Although a growing majority of the British public was against Franco, the movement was not strong enough to change government policy or save the Spanish Republic. Yet almost none of the many survivors Fyrth interviewed regretted their efforts for Spain or felt they had been wasted. The deep hatred of fascism engendered and the experience of practical democratic action helped to transform a whole political generation. ●

Margot Heinemann

Watching Protectors

News Out Of Africa: Biafra to Band Aid by *Paul Harrison* and *Robin Palmer Hilary Shipman (£5.95 pbk/£12.00 hbk),* is an extremely interesting and readable account of the TV media machine's approach to covering news out of, you've guessed it, Africa.

No qualms here in recommending this to anyone of any age: to those who want to know how we get to hear and see what we do on our screens about Africa (and most other places in the world); to those who see the Third World as a central part of the domestic political agenda; and even to those actively involved in development work and development education.

The authors hang their discussion on the media's approach to three recent famines – Biafra in 1968-70, Ethiopia in 1973 and Ethiopia again in 1984.

They describe the impact of new technology on patterns of news gathering (did you know that BBC TV and ITN have only nine correspondents resident overseas between them?) and tell a sorry tale of chance and frequent editorial indifference.

The current media interest in matters African is, they suggest, a fragile thing needing continued watchful protection. Criticisms? Some – but the good points of this book far outweigh its weaknesses. ●

Andy Mawson

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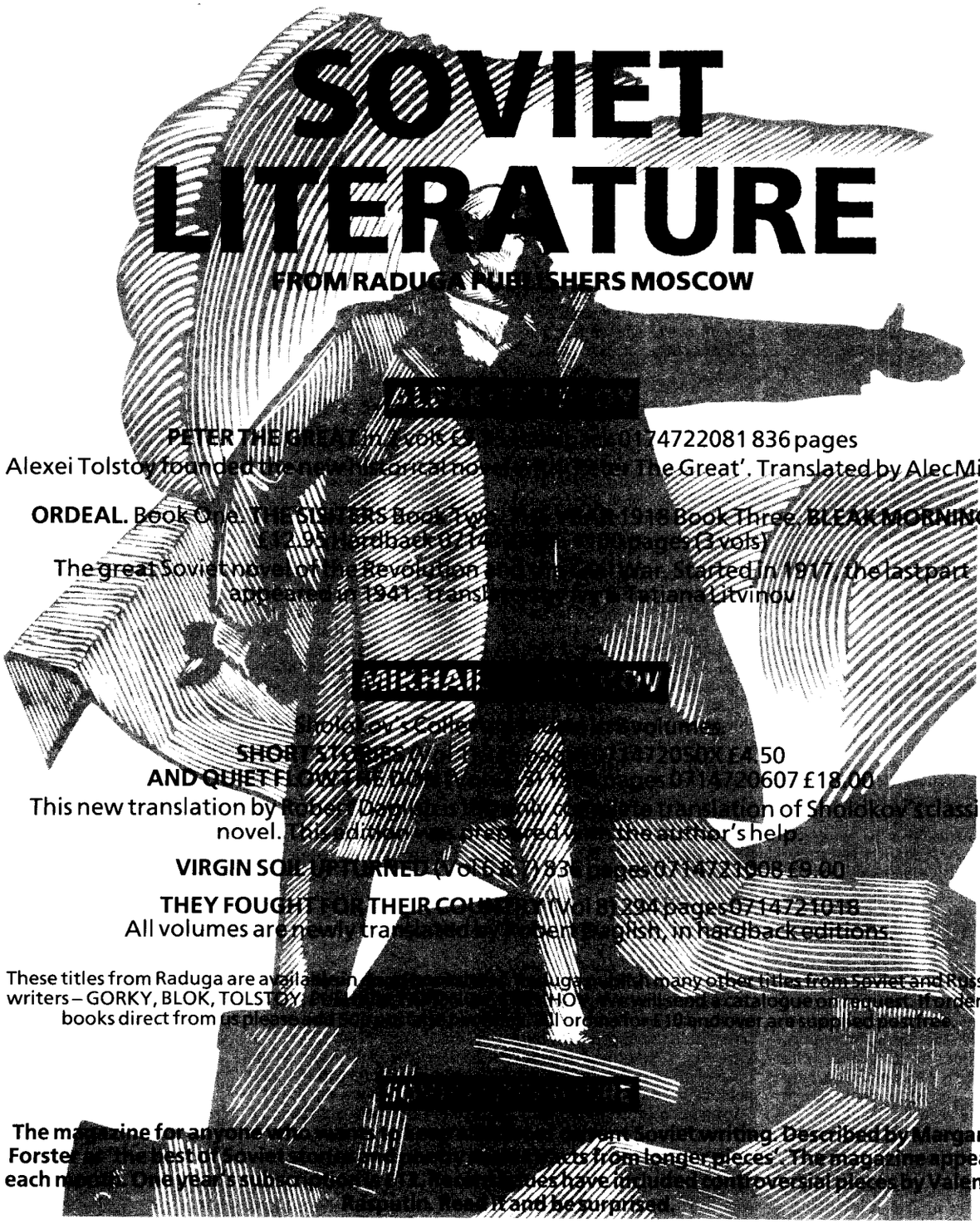

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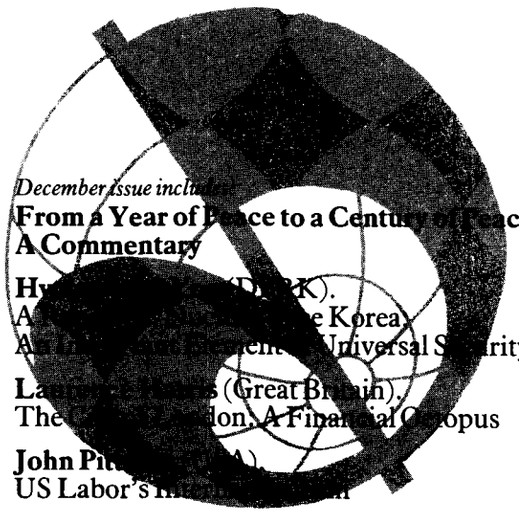

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UPDATE

THE YEAR AHEAD

As 1987 approaches here are Update's suggestions for some positive resolutions.

Join CND
You've always meant to and you know you should – so contact your local group tomorrow.
☛CND, 20-22 Underwood St, London N1.

Anti-Apartheid
13 Mandela St, London NW1 0DW.
☛Details 01 387 7966.

Greenpeace
6 Ensleigh St, London WC1M 0DX.
☛Details 01 608 1461.

Friends of the Earth
377 City Road, London EC1V 1NA.
☛Details 01 837 0731.

Drink Well
Switch to Nicaraguan coffee and make sure it's from a *Marxism Today* mug.
☛Coffee from NSC sales, 23 Bevenden St, London N1; mugs from *Marxism Today*, 16 St John St, London EC1, both £1.95 plus p&p.

A Great Read
Make sure the year doesn't pass without tackling one of the unread classics. Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (Penguin, three vols, £6.95 each) in the new Terence Kilmartin translation is an obvious choice. Or could it finally be time for *Capital?*
☛All titles available from Central Books, 37 Gray's Inn Rd, London WC1.

Anniversaries
1987, Jan 8 – is the 75th anniversary of the founding of the ANC. This year is also the 50th anniversary of Gramsci's death (April 27), and the 70th anniversary of Russian Revolution (Nov 7). Commemorate them in style!

EYES LEFT

A selection of new exhibitions opening in January.

National Gallery of Scotland
A selection of the marvellous watercolours of one of Britain's greatest artists, Turner, from the Vaughan Bequest. Jan 3-31.
☛Details 031 556 8921.

Royal Academy
Following last year's German retrospective, the spotlight falls on British Art – 1910 to the present day. Featured artists include Henry Moore, Francis Bacon and Ben Nicholson. Jan 15-April 5.
☛Details 01 734 9052.

Whitechapel Gallery
A rare opportunity to see the work of Bruce Nauman whose work questions the sources and uses of art. In this show, models of subterranean passages mix with neon signs and other works. Jan 16-Feb 22.
☛Details 01 377 0107.

Barbican Centre
An exhibition of court and country dress from Russia (1750-1920) taken from the Hermitage, Leningrad. Jan 29-April 26.
☛Details 01 638 4141.

Institute of Contemporary Art
To accompany the Channel Four series 'State of the Art', this show examines the current state of contemporary art. Using such themes as 'politics and representation' and 'sexuality, image, identity', there are works by artists such as Mary Kelly, Keifer, Joseph Beuys and Barbara Kruger. Jan 14-March 1.
☛Details 01 930 0493.

NEWS

From Resistance to Rebellion
An exhibition on black struggle in Britain since the second world war produced by the Institute of Race Relations. On tour this year and available for hire.
☛Details Busi Chaane 01 837 0041.

London Cycling Campaign
Cyclists are organising to prevent Kensington and Chelsea Council closing cycle lanes on Fulham Rd despite a drop in accidents since their introduction.
☛Details LCC 01 928 7220.

Marxism Today
We welcome you to join the volunteer team who play an important part in all aspects of the magazine. Many thanks to Linsey Firkser and Dan Glaister for their help on this issue.
☛Contact Jane Critchley 01 608 0265.

COMMUNITIES ALIVE

A selection from the wealth of creative work done in local communities but which rarely attracts national coverage.

Assembly Lines
Poet Tim Lewis has written a record of daily life in the Massey Fergusson tractor factory in Coventry. In poetry, prose and photography he depicts the boredom, danger and humour of working life.
☛Available from 23 John Tofts House, Leicester Row, Coventry CV1, price £1.25 plus 20p p&p.

Liberation Soldier
A collection of poetry by Joe Smythe, a railway guard from Manchester, on topical issues from South Africa to Manchester's housing estates. In a variety of moods, there is nonetheless an overall sense of crisis both personal and national.
☛Commonword Publishing, 61 Bloom St, Manchester M1 £2.50 plus 30p p&p.

Day In, Day Out
A selection from taped conversations with women in Monsall Hospital, Manchester. Their experiences in service during the war and at work in the mill are accompanied by photographs. Price £1.60.
☛Available from The Gatehouse Project, St Lukes, Sawley Rd, Miles Platting, Manchester M10.

National Storytelling Festival
A week-long celebration of storytelling and the oral tradition featuring Abbi Patrix, the best young story-teller in Europe and Diane Wolkstein's adaptation of the 4000-year-old Sumerian epic of the goddess Inanna. For adults and children alike. Jan 18-25.
☛Waterman Arts Centre, Brentford. Tel: 01 568 1176.

Chapter Video
This community video workshop based in South Wales has its roots in local campaigns and events. A new video catalogue is available.
☛Details Chapter Video 0222 42755.

Sistren Song
Following the recent tour of Britain, the Sistren Theatre group from Jamaica have published a booklet examining their plays and workshops in depth. Their work is based on the lives of the poorest women in Jamaica. Price £1.75.
☛Available from War on Want – 01 403 2266.

The Roundhouse
Britain's most exciting multi-cultural arts project has just published a report outlining its past, present and future objectives. However, there is still a need to raise £1m if these are to be achieved.
☛Details 01 482 5245.

EVENTS

Sandinista Six
Following the hugely successful Mandela 10km, *Marxism Today* is planning another Road Race for May 87. This time the cause will be the 'Nicaragua must Survive Campaign'.
☛If you are interested in helping to organise this run please contact Mark Perryman, 16 St John St, London EC1M 4AY, 01 608 0265.

Gramsci 87
Marxism Today is planning a major conference to mark the 50th anniversary of Gramsci's death in April 87. Lectures, seminars and films with national and international speakers.
☛Contact *Marxism Today*, 16 St John St, London EC1M 4AY.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOKS

Housing Finance
Shelter calls for a thorough reform of the housing finance system as the only way out of the current housing crisis. Labour's policy is likewise not judged up to the mark. Price £3.95.
☛Available from Shelter, 157 Waterloo Rd, London SE1.

Unions at Work
A study of the shop steward or staff rep. at work, showing that one in five workplaces have a union newsletter and only 8% of union reps. have access to a microcomputer. Price £1.25.
☛Labour Research Dept, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1.

Councils Support Co-ops
Local councils are urged to make more use of co-operative development both as a means of job creation and of improving work practices. Price £2.50. Published by CLES.
☛Available from Central Books 14 Leathermarket, London SE1.

The Employment Institute
Set up in 1985 to promote debate about how to reduce unemployment without inflation, a series of pamphlets has now appeared on incomes policy and profit sharing.
☛Details Employment Institute 01 735 0777.

READERS GROUPS

Marxism Today discussion groups and local events are springing up all over Britain. If you would like help in setting one up yourself contact *Marxism Today*, 16 St John St, London EC1M 4AY. Tel: *01 608 0265.*

Entries for the February Update should be sent to the office by Jan 2. For information: tel Nick Mirzoeff on 01 673 3450. Please try to ensure you give details of disabled access.

CONTRIBUTORS

This month's contributors include:
Charles Wheeler is the former BBC chief correspondent for the USA. He is now reporting for Newsnight.
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Andrew Marr is political correspondent of *The Independent.*
Jim Richardson researches and writes on Philippine history and politics.
Beatrix Campbell is a journalist on *City Limits* magazine and a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial board.
Jeffrey Weeks is the author of *Sexuality and its Discontents* (RKP) and *Sexuality* (Ellis Horwood/Tavistock).
Charlie Leadbeater is a journalist on the *Financial Times.*
Fred Halliday is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics.
Bob Geldof was the founder of Band Aid.
Noll Scott is a freelance journalist.
Catherine Hoskyns lectures in international relations at Coventry (Lanchester) Polytechnic. She is one of the authors of *Women's Rights and the EEC* published by Rights of Women Europe.
Stephen Wagg is lecturer in Sociology at East Warwickshire College, Rugby and a member of Leicestershire County Cricket Club.
Brian Sedgmore is Labour MP for Hackney North.
Hanif Kureishi is the author of *My Beautiful Launderette.*
Janie Glen lectures in adult education and is a member of the Communist Party's Executive Committee.
Martin Pople is co-editor of *Marxism Today*'s Channel 5 Choice section.
John Lloyd is editor of the *New Statesman* and co-author of *The Miners Strike 1984-5.*
Martin Ince is author of *The Politics of British Science.*
George Shire works at the Centre for Adult Education in Lambeth.
Malcolm Rutherford is assistant editor and political analyst of the *Financial Times.*
Diane Dixon co-edits *Marxism Today*'s Channel 5 Choice and is a member of the CP.
Margot Heinemann is a member of the CP's Theory and Ideology Committee.
Andy Mawson is a research fellow at St Anne's College, Oxford.
Melissa Benn is a freelance writer.

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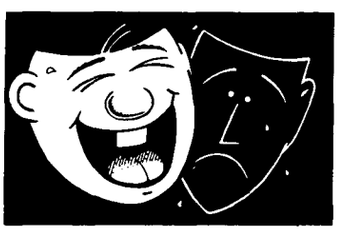

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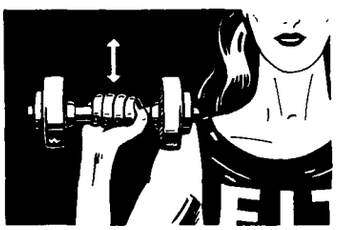

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COURSES

● **Marx in the Twentieth Century** – starting 9th January, 7.30 p.m. British Marxism in the Eighties: Issues and Perspectives. Tutor Peter Osborne. Starting 15th January 6.30 p.m. Details from extra mural Dept., London University. Tel. 01 636 3853.

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Initiating everything from dialectics to discos Marxism Today Discussion Groups are springing up all over Britain. If you would like help in setting one up yourself write to us at Box P001, Marxism Today, 16 St John St., London EC1M 4AY, we can provide advice, speakers, posters and ready-made publicity. Same goes if you want to know if there is a group near you. Get cracking.

● **Glasgow** January meeting; looking forward to a major event later in the year on the lines of Left Unlimited – Scotland needs open Marxist discussion, almost as much as MT needs a dose of Scottish reality. Happy Hogmanay comrades. Box P017.

● **Wellingborough** Discussion Group begins with open meeting on "Thatcherism", an MT Group: non-sectarian, all welcome. Sunday, January 25th. Box P018.

● **Cambridge University** Thanks for a great Winter Term, full programme of events for next term. Ideas Unbound. Ideas Unlimited. Box P013.

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Queen Mary College, London. Marxism, Red Wedge and Liberalism, coming at ya in the Quiet Lounge next term. Box P020.

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● **Wandsworth** Broad-minded Brighter minds in London's Blue Borough. Box P025.

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● **Penge and Bromley** Local Left Unlimited event planned for March '87. Full range of discussions, entertainments and style. Box P022.

● **Brighton South Coast** Left Unlimited at Sussex University, organised by Sussex District Communist Party, with Ken Livingstone and Beatrix Campbell and much, much more. Saturday January 31st. Surprise yourself, and your friends. Phone 0273 671882. Box P023.

University College Cardiff Write now for next term's programme of events. Box P024.

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NOTE: In all cases, send your enquiry to Marxism Today, 16 St John St, London EC1M 4AY, quoting the relevant box number.

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MEMORIAL

● **Doris Allison** died November, aged 86. Until 1979 she assisted M.T. in advertising and subscriptions. M.T. staff send their condolences to her family. She was a fine comrade.

● **Dear friend and comrade, Jan Rebane.** Suddenly of natural causes, 12th November. Well loved throughout the labour and trade union movement, especially in Lambeth where he worked and Lewisham where he lived. Memorial fund: c/o Lambeth Trade Union Resources Centre, Unit 117, Bon Marche Building, 444 Brixton Road, SW9 8EJ. Tel. 01 274 4000 x 372.

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Myra Hindley

In recent press coverage of the police search for two more childrens' bodies on Saddleworth Moor, the photograph most frequently used of Myra Hindley is one taken in 1966, the year of her conviction. Freezing her in time, it shows a pugilistic, bottled blonde with a sunken sullen stare. Those newspapers which continually reprint that photograph do so in the knowledge that Hindley will never go free as long as the public still hold to that caricature of Hindley.

Myra Hindley is now 44, and has served 20 years in prison – all in closed establishments. She was jailed in 1966 after being convicted with Ian Brady of the murders of Lesley Ann Downey, aged 10, and John Kilbride, 12. The bodies were found on the Pennine Moor.

Most accounts of her pre-prison life tell of a Lancashire working class childhood, but impute a sinister character to ordinary events and attributes – she liked sport, was a bit of a tomboy, had an above average IQ, was protective of her younger sister Maureen – because all are telling the tale of a monster in genesis. The beginning must explain the end.

Accounts are probably most accurate concerning Hindley's reaction to Brady, whom she met in 1961 when a typist in a chemical merchants in Manchester. To the unsophisticated 18 year-old, Brady was more than desirable. He was different; he had clean fingernails, wore business suits and spotless shirts, had a double vent at the back of his overcoat. It is rarely disputed that Hindley loved him deeply, would do or die for him. Convicted together in 1966, Hindley and Brady's romance *did* die and contact between the two is now non-existent.

What explains the continuing and ghoulish fascination of the Moors murderers, and Hindley in particular? It is much more than soap. As Mike Nellis, writing in the prison journal *The Abolitionist*, has pointed out, the story has many elements of a gothic drama. The *bleakness* of it all – the death of young innocence, the wild moors, the urban grimness of Manchester, prisons, mental institutions, darkness. And then the possibility of a reshoot, with the principal characters returning to the scene of their crime . . .

More prosaic elements explain the continuing public obsession. Since 1966 the crude headlines and chequebook methods of several tabloids have meant the press have been as much makers as reflectors of news about Hindley and Brady. They have run a quite deliberate campaign to keep Hindley in the public eye, ensuring that suggestions of her release on licence remain deeply unpopular. Any woman who gets to know Hindley in prison knows that she has instant money on release, if she wants it. Ex-prisoners specifically name this phenomenon 'the 30 pieces'.

Press images of the soft life are also fictitious. Hindley has a harder time than most lifers. She is set apart from prison life, always vulnerable to new reaction, from officers and prisoners, to her reputation. Hindley has been beaten up often.

Although often described as the 'devil's disciple', the fact that Hindley is a woman has made her guilt qualitatively different and greater in the public mind. Part of it is because she has broken one of the strongest taboos: women don't harm children. But she also invokes the old stereotype of a cold and calculating femaleness in crime – and in the way she has taken her punishment.

While Brady is now in a special hospital and does not want to be free, Hindley does want release. And there is both public resentment and intimations of manipulation surrounding her every act: the fact that she is taking an Open University course, has

NO FREEDOM FOR MYRA HINDLEY
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF QUEEN MYRA
Hindley awakes in her carpeted cell
She watches news in the TV room
Off for shower or session in gym
JOY OF KILLER MYRA
She wins freedom hope
MOORS monster Myra Hindley

Press Association

Myra: the myth lingers.

flowers in her cell, that friends talk of her as witty and intelligent, that people might *like* her. All is unforgivable.

And it is this idea of something or someone being literally 'unforgiveable' which underpins it all. Hindley's case raises two distinct and opposing moral perspectives about the essential nature of sin – whether evil is something that you do or something that you are – and forgiveness.

One perspective, most publicly articulated by Lord Longford – the Catholicism he shares with Hindley has helped to frame the argument in moral terms – is that Hindley is a sinner who has repented and should now go free. She is also, ironically, the most public example of a 'model' rehabilitation. No-one seriously argues that Hindley would ever kill again. It is generally agreed that the person most physically threatened by her freedom would be Hindley herself.

Those who oppose Longford believe Hindley should never be forgiven. More than that they want vengeance and retribution for what she has done. To them, Hindley is a symbol of where society draws the line, its outer limits. Any remorse shown by her, or acts that might be interpreted as forms of remorse – such as her late November offer to meet the mother of Keith Bennett – is only yet more evidence of her evil.

But there is more to it than that. Hindley has also become a justification – and her name a shorthand – for a range of retributive notions about crime and its punishment in general. The relatives of the dead and lost apart, it is no coincidence that the anti-Hindley campaign is run by people with an interest in keeping those retributive notions alive. And they do connect to something deeply punitive and fearful in people. It will be a brave politician who even begins to separate the meaning of Myra Hindley the person and prisoner from the meaning of Myra Hindley the national institution – and contemplates her release. ●

Melissa Benn

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